THOMAS FRANK ON JOURNALISM'S CONTENT-MILL

# HARPER'S

HARPER'S MAGAZINE / DECEMBER 2010 $7.99

## HAMMER AND SICKLE
*A story by Don DeLillo*

## A YEAR OF BIRDS
At Home on the North Platte River
*By Annie Proulx*

## WHICH WAY MADNESS LIES
Can Psychosis Be Prevented?
*By Rachel Aviv*

*Also: A new history of conservatism*

HARPER'S
MAGAZINE

John R. MacArthur, President and Publisher

*Editor*
Ellen Rosenbush
*Literary Editor*
Ben Metcalf
*Managing Editor*
Rafil Kroll-Zaidi
*Senior Editors*
Christopher Cox, Donovan Hohn
*Editor Emeritus*
Lewis H. Lapham
*Art Director*
Stacey D. Clarkson
*Associate Editors*
Claire Gutierrez,
Theodore Ross, Gemma Sieff
*Assistant Editors*
Christopher R. Beha, J. Gabriel Boylan,
Genevieve V. Smith, Sam Stark,
Emily Stokes, Justin Stone
*Assistant Art Director*
Alyssa Coppelman
*Editorial Interns*
Nicholas Kimbrell, Anthony Lydgate,
Julia Powers, Daoud Tyler-Ameen
*Art Intern*
Elina Mishuris
*Contributing Editors*
Ben Austen, Kevin Baker, Tom Bissell,
Charis Conn, Barbara Ehrenreich, Paul Ford,
Thomas Frank, Nicholas Fraser,
Rivka Galchen, William H. Gass, Jack Hitt,
Edward Hoagland, Scott Horton,
Frederick Kaufman, Garret Keizer,
Mark Kingwell, Naomi Klein,
Christian Lorentzen, Wyatt Mason,
Bill McKibben, Benjamin Moser,
Duncan Murrell, Vince Passaro,
Matthew Power, Francine Prose,
David Quammen, David Samuels,
Jonathan Schell, Jeff Sharlet, Earl Shorris,
Jake Silverstein, Ken Silverstein,
Mark Slouka, Rebecca Solnit,
Matthew Stevenson, John Jeremiah Sullivan,
John Edgar Wideman, Tom Wolfe,
Thomas de Zengotita

*Vice President and Associate Publisher*
Peter D. Kendall
*Vice President and General Manager*
Lynn Carlson
*Vice President, Circulation*
Shawn D. Green
*Vice President, Public Relations*
Kathy Park Price
*Assistant to the Publisher*
Barbara Andreasson
Kim Lau, *Senior Accountant*
Eve Brant, *Office Manager*
Adrian Kneubuhl, *Staff*
Advertising Sales:
(212) 420-5720; Fax: (212) 260-1096
Frank M. Smith, *Advertising Director*
Cheryl Vawdrey, *Sales Representative/*
*Book Publishing, Art, and Culture*
Jennifer C. Adams, *Production Director*
Patricia D. Beck, *Advertising Coordinator*
*Sales Representatives*
*Chicago:* Tauster Media Resources, Inc.
(630) 858-1558; Fax: (630) 858-1510
*Detroit:* Maiorana & Partners, Ltd.
(248) 546-2222; Fax: (248) 546-0019
*Direct Response:* Emily Wilcox
(212) 420-5772; Fax: (212) 260-1096
*Canada:* JMB Media International
(450) 538-2468; Fax: (450) 538-5468

# LETTERS

## Wave Goodbye

Susan Faludi's theory of habitual matricide as the cause of generational tensions in contemporary feminism ["American Electra," Essay, October] does not fit my own experience. I was active in the feminist movement in the 1970s in Berkeley and cofounded a national organization. With very few exceptions, we all cherished our mothers and felt that the societal changes we sought amounted to a vast correction of the forces that had constrained them as well as us. As for our foremothers in the feminist movement, we were fascinated with the stories of their struggles and their lives. We felt a strong sense of continuity running from the Seneca Falls meeting in 1848 to our own time, and we believed we were making significant progress that our daughters would build on in their own lives.

The break in continuity occurred with the backlash against feminism during and after the Reagan years. Suddenly most young women considered "feminism" a pejorative label; later, it was Seventies feminism, in particular, that had to be rejected. Because Faludi wrote an acclaimed book about this phenomenon, *Backlash*, it is curious that she did not include that major shift in the 1980s as a cause of today's fractured situation.

*Charlene Spretnak*
Ojai, Calif.

In college, listening to Second Wave professors brag about their time on the "front lines of the Revolution," I was hard-pressed to find much to celebrate. Most of the women in my mother's generation seemed stressed out, pissed off, overworked, and underpaid. And that was just the middle-class white women. Black and Latino women had been chucked off the bus altogether, stuck with doing all the work that middle-class white women thought too demeaning to bother with. I couldn't understand how a movement with ideological claims to raising women's status would choose to devalue what women did and glorify what men did. Rather than being liberated, women were stuck with two full-time jobs, one in the home, the other in the workforce—where we were expected

Harper's Magazine *welcomes reader response. Please address mail to Letters,* Harper's Magazine, *666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012, or email us at letters@harpers.org. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters are subject to editing. Volume precludes individual acknowledgment.*

to work harder than men for less pay. The Second Wavers, with their open contempt for child rearing, apparently didn't see the world they were leaving behind for their daughters.

It's amusing to hear baby boomers—members of a generation long mocked for its narcissism and obsession with youth culture—accuse their successors of narcissistic ageism. But Olga Vives's claim that boomers "created these little monsters" shows a hubris bordering on delusion. How can you claim that you despise motherhood and then insist that you were too doting as a mother? The denial would be funny if it weren't so painful to a generation of girls who grew up as these women's daughters.

*Lynne Goldhammer*
Brooklyn

Susan Faludi takes a rather dismissive view of Judith "Jack" Halberstam's celebration of Lady Gaga as representative of the current generation of young feminists. As a Second Waver and a professor of women's studies, I can tell you that many of my students appreciate Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta—a.k.a. Gaga—as their generation's most visible advocate for LGBT rights.

Yes, the music and fashion are fun and often funny, but my students were not laughing when they listened to Gaga's recent speech in Maine, in which she urged the repeal of our government's absurd Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. On that point, the young and the old-school feminists most likely agree.

*Roseanne Giannini Quinn*
Cupertino, Calif.

Working for more than a decade in the field of international human rights, most recently with women who have survived forced sterilization, I have collaborated with men and women of different ages, nationalities, races, religions, and sexual orientations; with people from all over the world; with people who are illiterate and people who hold multiple degrees. In my experience, these men and women work as hard as they can, sometimes against incredible odds, to protect the human rights of women and girls.

The dysfunction Faludi describes, then, may have its roots in a flawed understanding evident at the very beginning of her essay—namely, that feminism has been about "getting men to give women some of the power." Power is a process, not a commodity to bestow or withhold. It is something every human being can generate, and women worldwide are generating more of it today than they have at any time in recorded history.

The wider world provides positive examples of cross-generational transfers of knowledge between women, such as the International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers. Hailing from Africa, the Americas, and Asia, the grandmothers have identified their ambassadors for the succeeding generations and are preserving indigenous knowledge for the future. They have also petitioned the Vatican for the repeal of papal bulls dating back to 1455 that granted dominion to European nations over lands occupied by tribal peoples. What would have been a radical proposition even forty years ago is now an idea whose time has come.

*Gwendolyn Albert*
Middletown, Conn.

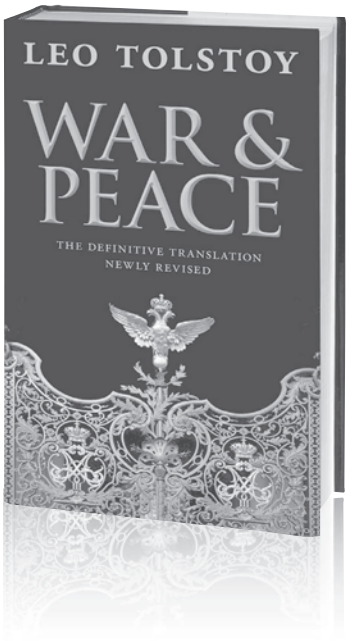
## Dietary Distinctions

Patrick Symmes's account of living a month in Cuba on only fifteen dollars ["Thirty Days as a Cuban," Letter, October] is heavy on the calorie-counting and sadly sparse on a deeper understanding of how Cubans actually live on so little.

For some reason, one of the first people he meets, a woman at the information desk in the airport, gives him two coins for his bus ride into town. Did he tell her he was on a tight budget? Why do so many people end up helping him out in his self-imposed poverty?

The main voice of the article is his growling stomach and obsession with the varying prices and amounts

"If life could write, it would write like Tolstoy."
—Isaac Babel




In this REVISED AND UPDATED EDITION of the definitive and highly acclaimed Maude translation, Tolstoy's genius and the power of his prose are now available to a new generation of readers!

Available wherever books are sold
www.oup.com/worldsclassics

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

With all the money he'd saved at Daedalus, Herb could finally afford a little relaxation

Daedalus Books

After 30 Years Still the Best Browse in Bargain Books

For a free catalog call 1.800.395.2665 salebooks.com

of food he is consuming, but far more interesting are the scraps of information we receive about the Cubans around him who cannot fly home to a world of surplus.

What makes chronically hungry Cubans retain their dignity and compassion, with random strangers offering Symmes food and a few of their own hard-won coins? This trumps the predictable, ravenous feelings of a well-fed American who is out of his capitalist comfort zone (and, by his own admission, could stand to lose a few pounds).

*Simone White*
Venice, Calif.

While sympathetic and amusing, Patrick Symmes's article missed an opportunity to compare the everyday travails of Cubans with those of their Caribbean and Central American cousins. The CIA has done the legwork for us by comparing Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Haiti (pre-quake), Honduras (pre-coup), El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Jamaica, and the United States. According to this data, Cuba has the lowest unemployment rate, the highest per-capita education expenditure, and the longest school attendance. It's third in life expectancy and fourth in GDP per capita.

Not only does this cast Symmes's article in a different light, it also illumines the wretched condition of most of our neighbors to the south. I cannot help feeling that much responsibility for that wretchedness originates with U.S. policies of interference in, and exploitation of, those poor countries.

*Godfree Roberts*
Cobb, Calif.

Are we to conclude, after reading about Patrick Symmes's foray into Cuba, that a free-market economy would be an improvement over the corrupt system that has emerged there? When I was in Cuba twenty years ago, I, too, noted the scarcity of protein in the state-run stores, although things were not as dire as they are today. When I questioned a local living just outside Camagüey as to why he would put up with such scarcity and inconvenience, he stared back at me and explained that before the revolution, he would listen to his children crying from hunger at night and he was helpless to do anything about it.

With the ration book he clutched in his fist, he now knew that he would have his ration of rice, beans, sugar, eggs, and perhaps chicken every month. This was a comfort he could only dream of when his children were young, and one that I struggled to understand. Patrick Symmes's article provides none of that understanding.

*John A. Kovach*
Wallingford, Penn.

If you take at face value everything Symmes writes, you would expect people to be dying in the streets. But no one starves, and no one lives on the street (unlike in Canada, where I live, or in the United States).

There are no untruths in Symmes's article, but there is a lot missing. Yes, it is like that, but it is also not like that. The system doesn't work, and yet by some miracle it does. *La gente resuelve*. People resolve things. *Siempre hay salida*. There's always a way. Nothing is possible in Cuba, and yet everything is possible.

One thing that the article doesn't mention is the billion dollars that are sent from families in the States to their Cuban relatives. That helps a lot. There is a double meaning in another Cuban saying: *Hay que tener fe*. You have to have faith. But "*fe*," which means "faith," can stand also for *familia en el exterior*—a family abroad. That's another way around the embargo!

*Susan Johnson*
Toronto

Patrick Symmes may have visited Cuba multiple times, but reading Cuban history must not have been part of his preparation for those trips. Otherwise, he could not have written: "I sat on the pedestal of some heroic

obscurity—a statue of a mother thrusting her son toward battle."

He is referring to the statue of Mariana Grajales, in the park that bears her name, in the Vedado section of Havana. Far from being a "heroic obscurity," Grajales is a venerated heroine of the Cuban independence movement, both for her participation in the struggle and for being the mother of rebel general Antonio Maceo, who, together with José Martí, is one of the two most significant figures in the liberation of Cuba from Spanish colonial rule. She lost several of her children in that fight (symbolized by her "thrusting her son toward battle"), but the fervor of her dedication to the cause never flagged. Contrary to Patrick Symmes's intimation of post-'59 revisionism, she has been a well-known and important historical figure since the beginning of the republic.

*Ada Bello*
Philadelphia


Statement Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685 showing the ownership, management and circulation of Harper's Magazine. Published monthly (12 issues per year). Date of filing September 30, 2010. Publication No. 514-410. Annual subscription price: $21.00.

Complete mailing address of known office of publication: 666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012-2317.

Complete mailing address of headquarters of general business office of Publisher: 666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012-2317.

Publisher: John R. MacArthur, 666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012; Editor: Ellen Rosenbush, 666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012; Managing Editor: Rafil Kroll-Zaidi, 666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

Known bondholders, mortgagees and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of the total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: None.

Changes during the preceding 12 months in the purpose, function and nonprofit status of the Harper's Magazine Foundation and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes: None.

Extent and nature of circulation:

| | Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months | Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date |
|---|---|---|
| A) Total number of copies printed: | 279,091 | 280,775 |
| B) Paid circulation: 1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541: | 177,467 | 183,514 |
| 2) Paid In-County Subscriptions: | 0 | 0 |
| 3) Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales and other Non-USPS Paid Distribution: | 24,370 | 27,278 |
| 4) Other Classes Mailed through the USPS: | 0 | 0 |
| C) Total paid circulation: | 201,837 | 210,792 |
| D) Free distribution by mail: | 3,296 | 3,462 |
| E) Free distribution outside of the mail: | 2,045 | 1,894 |
| F) Total free distribution: | 5,341 | 5,356 |
| G) Total distribution: | 207,178 | 216,148 |
| H) Copies not distributed: | 71,913 | 64,627 |
| I) Total: | 279,091 | 280,775 |
| Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation: | 97.42% | 97.52% |

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(Signed) John R. MacArthur, President & Publisher



The literary magazine by children

"The *New Yorker* of the 8-to-13 set."
—*Ms.*

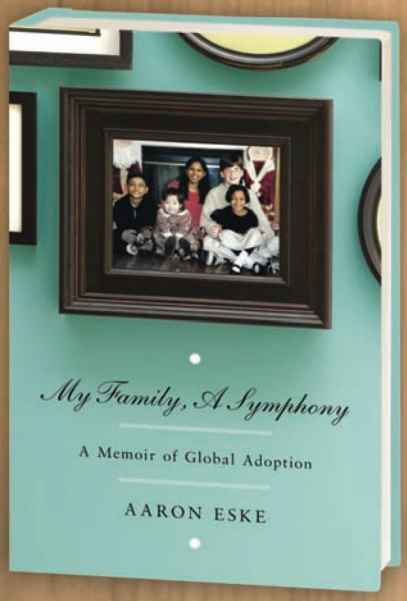
Inspiring stories, poems, and art by children and young teens—a great gift for budding writers and artists

6 issues per year for $37

stonesoup.com | 800-447-4569
P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063 USA

HP

One Young Man's Incredible Journey . . .




From Nebraska...
To India...
From Korea...
To Africa...

And back to the home he realized he never truly understood.

*My Family, A Symphony* is the triumphant true story of a family that came together through adoption, against all odds, and across 10,000 miles.

palgrave macmillan

Now available in bookstores
$25.00 hc • ISBN: 978-0-230-10415-0 • www.palgrave.com

# EASY CHAIR

## Bright Frenetic Mills

*By Thomas Frank*

Although it scarcely seems believable today, I originally came to journalism as a practical, responsible career move. It was the mid-1990s, I had just finished a Ph.D. in history, and I was toiling away as a lecturer at a college in Chicago. Thanks to an overproduction of historians and the increasing use of adjunct labor by universities, the market had become hopelessly glutted. Friends of mine all told the same stories of low-wage toil, of lecturing and handing out A's while going themselves without health insurance or enough money for necessities. Our tenured elders, meanwhile, could only rarely be moved to care. What was a predicament to us was a liberation to them—a glorious lifting of their burden to teach. For the university, which was just then discovering the wonders of profit-making, it was something even more fabulous: a way to keep labor costs down.

I got out. I discovered that I could earn as much for a few stories in an alternative newsweekly as I could for an entire semester of Civil War to Present, and so I left academia forever.

Now it is journalism that is collapsing. Ad revenue is in decline. Newsgathering staffs are decimated. Distant bureaus are closed. Print editions shrink or disappear. It is next to impossible to make readers pay for online content. There is no point in denying it. The industry is dying.

And when it's not dying by more or less natural causes, it's being hustled into the grave by bright entrepreneurs with big new ideas. Consider the poor Tribune Company, publisher of the floundering *Chicago Tribune,* the shrinking *Los Angeles Times,* and a collection of other once-trusted household names. A few years ago it was bought out by Chicago real estate mogul Sam Zell, who planned to rescue the papers from disaster. People needed to understand, he said in 2008, that "if we keep operating the way we've been operating in the past, there is no future."

Mr. Zell's bold solution to this crisis was to install at his company's helm one Randy Michaels, a former radio executive famed for applying the "principles" of McDonald's to the airwaves, along with a cohort of Michaels's loutish radio pals. Churlishness is the ticket to success nearly everywhere else in business these days. Why not here? According to an account by David Carr in the *New York Times,* Michaels and his merry band of Babbitts proceeded to declare righteous war on journalistic professionalism, closing career opportunities to the qualified and conspicuously blending advertising with editorial. And although these radio execs were almost entirely innocent of newspaper experience, they were masters of the art of the grab, pulling down millions in bonuses while the company slogged on through bankruptcy proceedings.

And—need I say it, reader?—all this was done in the name of revitalizing the business by constructing, as a missive from Mr. Michaels put it, "a fun, non-linear creative environment." (Mr. Michaels announced his intention to resign a few weeks after making this claim.)

Quality journalism is not, of course, a function of newsprint. It can theoretically work in other media just as well, and by now there are enough examples of bloggers breaking big stories to put the paper-based argument to rest. The problem is not the end of the newspaper; it's that professional newsgathering organizations can no longer be supported by the for-profit system. Either the profit must go or the professionalism.

It's easy to predict which course the market will take. Just look at journalism's greatest foul-up of recent years: its almost complete failure to warn the public about the collapse of the subprime bubble. In that case, the convergence of journalism and profit meant journalists had trouble suspecting anything might be amiss.

Or, looking to the future, consider the example of Demand Media, a so-called content-mill, which uses a vast collection of Web-recruited freelancers to generate articles for about $15 per 300-word item; copy editors are said to get $2.50 for each piece they correct. The outfit's editorial direction is charted by what the company's prospectus calls "our proprietary algorithms," which is to say, equations that mainly weigh two factors: what people are searching for on Google and what advertisers might pay to associate themselves with a given topic.

According to Demand's manifesto—yes, they have a manifesto—all this is merely "listening to the customer," an "incredibly liberating" development that "guides" not only the "content we create" but "the communities we nurture." Its competitor, Associated Content, actually calls itself "The People's Media Company"; on the occasion of its purchase by Yahoo!, Associated's founder claimed he had in mind "a democratization of content."

How egalitarian. Of course, the real source of the mills' magic would

*Thomas Frank will now be writing each month's Easy Chair essay.*

have been familiar in the nineteenth century: an inventive way to minimize labor costs. The content-mill is like a temp agency for writers, a literary maquiladora. It automates not some part of the creative act but rather the context in which it takes place: it deprofessionalizes journalism. You can see the results for yourself on eHow.com, one of the friendly showplaces of Demand content, where you can find out "How to Make Your Eyes Look Bigger" or "How to Replace a CV Joint on a Chevy Avalanche," the latter penned by a fellow who, according to his bio, "is widely published on numerous writing websites and runs a his [*sic*] small writing business out of his home in Marietta, OH."*

*Columbia Journalism Review* recently put a giant hamster wheel on its cover to bemoan this state of affairs, this frantic race to the bottom, this coming journalistic war of all against all. As for the entrepreneurship involved, one thinks back to the days of the robber barons, when a deluge of life's goodness went to, say, the innovator who figured out how to make his workers live in company towns so he could deduct rent from their paychecks. One thinks of the immortal words of utility baron Samuel Insull: "My experience is that the greatest aid to efficiency of labor is a long line of men waiting at the gate."

Nowadays we don't speak as plainly as old man Insull. It is the convention of our age to look at situations like this and declare that people are actually empowered by standing in that long line, that queueing up there frees them to engage in some kind of synergistic community-building—and that, come to think of it, the hamster is a noble beast. Democracy-talk has long provided the cover for the latest advances in rapaciousness, and a natural hostility toward elitism has furnished the official explanation for the great project of transferring the country's wealth to the uppermost 1 percent. And it is plain that the rise of the content-mills today merely advances the strategy launched years ago by the founder of *USA Today*, whereby focus groups were used to steer news coverage, critical attitudes were stigmatized as cynicism, and all of it was done in the name of "listening." At the time, you will recall, this was known as the "journalism of hope."

This might be the worst time ever to attend journalism school. And yet if you cast about in those high places where the flame of the profession is supposed to be guarded, you will discover that almost no one has an idea for tackling the big problems in a way that stands a chance of preserving journalism. The looming catastrophe has merely furnished an opportunity for repeating, in an ever-higher register, the management-theory clichés of the past two decades. Years from now, only a handful of professional news-gathering organizations may remain, but you can rest assured that the leaders of the nation's J-schools will still be talking about the need to "listen to the audience," trilling wondrously that we must "embrace change," and writing ecstatic little odes to "entrepreneurship."

Let us note, before proceeding, that the Editorial Advisory Board set up by Demand Media back in February includes, among others, Kevin Z. Smith, former president of the Society of Professional Journalists; Ernest James Wilson III, dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California; and Teri Schwartz, dean of the School of Theater, Film, and Television at UCLA.

Jeff Jarvis, a well-known blogger and management author, was also asked to join the board; he declined. ("Demand is uniquely controversial right now," he explained.) Mr. Jarvis would have been quite a catch: he was recently named the head of the brand-new Tow–Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism at the City University of New York (Tow and Knight are the names of the foundations bankrolling this particular hamster-training facility). Although Mr. Jarvis is willing to listen to critics of the content-mills, he also maintains, on his blog, "that we should not miss the key insights and lessons in Demand's model," which he describes as "finding new ways to listen to what readers and the market want . . ."—ahh, listening to the audience—"and second, cutting content creation into its constituent elements and creating a market for creation to find new efficiencies."

What makes the content-mills so innovative, so worth studying, in other words, are the very aspects of their operations that make them so toxic to the form of professionalism the J-schools exist to protect.

And should you be wondering what J-schools will teach in the future, or on what grounds they will continue to admit students, simply heed the direction taken by the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, which was moved by the crisis, back in 2006, to appoint as its dean one John Lavine, a newspaper marketing expert. *Chicago* magazine called him a "campus revolutionary" for his announcement that "I'm blowing up the whole curriculum," though the only thing he seems to have blown up is the division between journalism and marketing, the latter of which, he assured an audience of journalism educators in 2009, is "essential to news and every other aspect of what we do." (Apparently that's because marketing is really a form of etiquette, a way of "being respectful to your audience.")

Otherwise, to judge Mr. Lavine by what information is publicly available, all that is remarkable about him is the guilelessness of his techno-optimism, a sort of gadget-love I haven't seen since I stopped going to management conferences in 2000. In that speech from last year, which you can watch yourself thanks to the awesomeness of the Internet, Mr. Lavine can be seen enthusing over the awesome new miniature computers that are coming, the awesome new GPS devices, the awesome new videoconferencing technology, the awesome new digital billboards, and his awesome Kindle, which reads what is left of the newspaper to him as he drives along in his car.

Maybe it's too much for Mr. Lavine to imagine that these admirable, friendly machines might have a role in making life impossible for his student hamsters. And so, in the reassuring manner I associate with the Sunday schools of my youth, he tells his fellow

* *You can also read content-mill text on* USA Today*'s website, which has outsourced the writing of certain travel features ("Family Road Trip Planning") to Demand and its army of freelancers. Other newspapers have followed suit.*

journalism educators not to worry too much, that "be it strategic communications, or marketing, or journalism, or whatever … know we're going to get through it. We are going to get through it. Because people are going to want what we all represent."

I sincerely hope that Mr. Lavine is right. But I'm not counting on it. What you find as you explore the tweets and blog posts of the profession's leaders is that the failure of newspapers has brought with it a cognitive failure as well, in which a handful of superstitions have come to obscure what is actually happening in the world. So powerful is our desire to believe in the benevolent divinity of technology that it cancels out our caution, forces us to dismiss doubt as so much simple-minded Luddism. We have trouble grasping that the Internet might not bring only good; that an unparalleled tool for enlightenment and research and transparency might also bring unprecedented down-dumbing; that something that empowers the individual might also wreck the structures that have protected the individual for decades.

Jay Rosen of NYU, for instance, is a smart and lively journalism professor. He has for years taken as his special commission the taunting of writers he calls "curmudgeons," by which he seems to mean those who express misgivings about blogging, Twitter, "citizen journalism," and so on. When insulting these doubters for their old-fashioned cluelessness he can be clever and satisfyingly vicious. But put Mr. Rosen face to virtual face with a master of the new-media world—say, Richard Rosenblatt, CEO of Demand Media—and a more conciliatory man seems to take his place. Mr. Rosen had been calling Demand nasty names before interviewing Mr. Rosenblatt online in December of 2009, and this was his opportunity to smite the villainous organization. Here was his most direct question:

> Someone who follows my work and knew I was interviewing you told me to ask you this: Do you love the Web? The implied question there is: If you love the Web, then why are you doing this, running these content farms … ?

*Do you love the Web.* Because if your love was true—if your heart was pure—you couldn't possibly do such a thing. This is the sentimental check-and-balance, the safety catch that is supposed to protect us. All it will really protect, of course, is the Web itself.

Just to rub it in, here was Mr. Rosenblatt's reply:

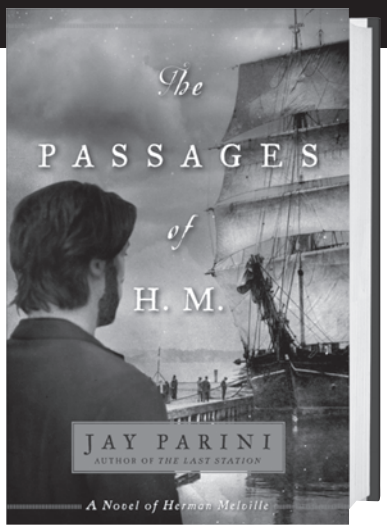
> OMG. My entire career and life has been about the Web. Trying to innovate and create value where open spaces exist. We do not have a content mill as we discussed but an efficient method to get people the information they need when they want it. That is improving the Internet and I am proud of it.

Quite a bit has happened since the Web-crazy days of the late Nineties. We have lived through bubble after bubble after bubble; endured waves of accounting fraud so open they might be called fads; seen political entrepreneurship work its wonders on Washington's K Street; tasted the spoiled fruits of deregulation; watched the destruction of American manufacturing, the sinking of the middle class, the slow demise of labor unions, and so on. But the myths of the magic market persist as though nothing had happened to shake our faith in all those intervening years.

"Now that the commercial system of journalism is disintegrating … our journalism schools for the most part appear clueless," the critic Robert McChesney wrote me recently. "The fact that the market is voting emphatically that journalism is no longer a profitable exercise, or at least profitable enough to provide the level of journalism our nation requires, simply does not compute."

Old Samuel Insull might be plenty pleased by that. Let the line grow long at the factory gate. Let the hamsters compete to make the wheel spin, cranking out their $15 stories and tweeting their little tweets while the Republic goes to hell. And by all means let the professors teach the wonders of "entrepreneurship." We all know what answer lies at the end of that line of inquiry: The only real solution to the hamster-wheel problem is to be the guy who owns the pet store. ■

Literary titan
Herman Melville emerges
from the shadows in
this masterful new novel
from the author of
THE LAST STATION




"EXTRAORDINARY...
Jay Parini, against all odds, captures his white whale of a subject and then frees him for us to behold."
—Thomas Mallon,
author of *Henry and Clara* and *Fellow Travelers*

"Who would have thought it would have taken until now, the twenty-first century, to get a clear view of America's most mysterious novelist, Herman Melville? We have it now, through the magic of Jay Parini's SUPERIOR novel."
—Gore Vidal

"INGENIOUS...a novel of startling and inventive journeys."
—Peter Balakian,
author of *Black Dog of Fate*

DOUBLEDAY
Available wherever books are sold
Also available as an eBook
www.doubleday.com

# HARPER'S INDEX

Percentage change in the U.S. unemployment rate since June 2009, when the recession officially ended **:** +1
Chance that a heterosexual man who moved in with his partner in 2010 had been unemployed for at least a year **:** 1 in 4
Estimated percentage of all U.S. murders that are committed by women **:** 10
Percentage of executions for murder since 1977 that were of women **:** 1
Percentage of U.S. female senior-level executives who say they have had an affair with a male boss **:** 15
Estimated percentage change since 2000 in the number of management positions in U.S. companies held by women **:** 0
Percentage change in reading scores for public-school fourth graders since No Child Left Behind became law **:** +1
Number of delayed-notice search warrants granted by federal judges last year under the Patriot Act **:** 1,150
Number that were related to drug offenses and terrorism, respectively **:** 844, 6
Number of times between January and June that Google turned over user information to government investigators **:** 4,287
Date a congressional report called the number of government entities to be created by health-care reform "unknowable" **:** 7/8/10
Value of economic-recovery bonds the State of Louisiana has sold since Hurricane Katrina **:** $5,900,000,000
Percentage of the revenue that has been spent on projects in New Orleans **:** 1
Percentage spent on the Lower Ninth Ward **:** 0
On the state's oil industry **:** 29
Estimated percentage change in the poverty rate in the developing world since 1990 **:** –40
Change if China is not included in this figure **:** –18
Estimated value of Chinese household income that goes unreported **:** $1,400,000,000,000
Portion of China's GDP this represents **:** 1/3
Portion of all pencils, pens, and crayons sold last year that were manufactured in China **:** 1/3
Percentage of African Americans in a September survey who said they feel their standard of living is improving **:** 63
Percentage of white Americans who feel this way **:** 40
Percentage change in the U.S. suicide rate for every 500 meters above sea level **:** +17
Price a British company charges to have a deceased person's ashes pressed into a package of 30 vinyl records **:** $4,704
Estimated loss to Japan's economy last year from suicides and depression **:** $29,000,000,000
Percentage of all food consumed in Cuba that is imported **:** 80
Chance that an Indian child younger than five is chronically malnourished **:** 1 in 2
Rank of carbonated beverages among the best-selling grocery items in the United States this year **:** 1
Rank of baked desserts, pizza, and soda as sources of calories for American children, respectively **:** 1, 2, 3
Number of children born last year on Christmas Day in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania **:** 3
Chances that an American believes that Jesus Christ will return to earth by 2050 **:** 2 in 5
Percentage change since 2008 in the number of Jewish Americans who identify themselves as Republican **:** +77
Chance that an American believes Ramadan is the Jewish day of atonement **:** 1 in 10
Chance that a U.S. Protestant knows who Martin Luther is **:** 1 in 2
Percentage of Americans who believe that Stephen King wrote *Moby-Dick* **:** 4
Number of U.S. states in which it is legal to own a tiger without a license **:** 9
Portion of the world's reindeer herds that are currently in decline **:** 4/5
Number of poisonous dead mice the USDA airdropped into Guam this year to eradicate an invasive snake species **:** 316
Milligrams of acetaminophen inserted into each mouse **:** 80
Number of episodes of *Happy Days* that aired after the one in which the Fonz jumped a shark **:** 164

*Figures cited are the latest available as of October 2010. Sources are listed on page 74.*
*"Harper's Index" is a registered trademark.*

# READINGS

[Essay]

## THE PARTY OF LOSS

*By Corey Robin, from "Conservatism and Counter-revolution from Burke to Palin," published in the Summer issue of* Raritan. *Robin is the author of* Fear: The History of a Political Idea.

Ever since Edmund Burke invented conservatism as an idea, the conservative has styled himself a man of prudence and moderation. Yet the political efforts that have roused the conservative to his most profound reflections—the reactions against the French and Bolshevik revolutions, the defense of slavery and Jim Crow, the attack on social democracy and the welfare state, the serial backlashes against the New Deal, the Great Society, civil rights, feminism, and gay rights—have been anything but that. There is a not-so-subterranean strain of imprudence and immoderation, risk-taking and adventurism, running through that tradition. Conservatism is an ideology of reaction, but that reactionary imperative presses conservatism to critique and reconfigure the old regime, to make privilege popular and to transform a tottering old regime into a dynamic, ideologically coherent movement of the masses: a new old regime, one could say, that brings the energy of the street to the antique inequalities of a dilapidated estate.

It is hardly provocative to say that conservatism arose in reaction to the French Revolution, but if we look more carefully at two emblematic voices of that reaction—Burke and Joseph de Maistre—we find a surprising antipathy, bordering on contempt, for the old regime they claim as their cause. The opening chapters of Maistre's *Considerations on France* are an unrelenting assault on the *ancien régime*'s three pillars—the aristocracy, the church, and the monarchy—which he dismisses with a line from Racine: "Now see the sad fruits your faults produced,/Feel the blows you have yourselves induced."

In Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* he describes Marie Antoinette as a "delightful vision … glittering like the morning-star, full of life, and splendor, and joy." Burke takes her beauty as a symbol of the loveliness of the old regime, in which feudal manners and mores "made power gentle" and "by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society." But beauty, Burke writes in his *Sublime and Beautiful,* is always a sign of decadence; it arouses pleasure, which gives way to indifference or leads to a total dissolution of the self. "Beauty acts," he writes, "by relaxing the solids of the whole system." It's this relaxation and dissolution of bodies—physical, social, political bodies—that make beauty such a potent symbol and agent of degeneration and death.

What these two opening statements suggest is that the greatest enemy of the old regime is neither the revolutionary nor the reformer; it is the old regime itself, or, to be more precise, the defenders of the old regime. They simply lack the ideological wherewithal to press the principles of the old regime with vigor, clarity, and purpose. They have grown fat and complacent, so roundly enjoying the privileges of their position that they cannot see the coming catastrophe. When the abolitionists began pressing their own principles,

John C. Calhoun drove himself into a rage over the easy living and willful cluelessness of his comrades on the plantation. "All we want is concert," he pleaded with his fellow Southerners, to "unite with zeal and energy in repelling approaching dangers." But, he went on, "I dare not hope that anything I can say will arouse the South to a due sense of danger; I fear it is beyond the power of the mortal voice to awaken it in time from the fatal security into which it has fallen."

Although conservatives are hostile to the goals of the left, they are often its best students, learning from the revolutions they oppose. Sometimes their studies are self-conscious and strategic, as they look to the left for ways to bend new vernaculars, or new media, to their suddenly delegitimated aims. Fearful that the philosophes had taken control of popular opinion in France, reactionary theologians in the middle of the eighteenth century stopped writing abstruse disquisitions for one another and began to produce Catholic agitprop, which was distributed through the very networks that brought enlightenment to the French people. They spent vast sums funding essay contests (like those in which Rousseau made his name) to reward writers who wrote accessible and popular defenses of religion. Pioneers of the Southern Strategy in the Nixon Administration, to cite a more recent example, understood that after the civil rights movement the G.O.P. could no longer make simple appeals to white racism. As White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman noted in his diary, Nixon "emphasized that you have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the Blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to." Republican strategist Lee Atwater spelled out the system's elements more clearly:

> You start out in 1954 by saying, "Nigger, nigger, nigger." By 1968 you can't say "nigger"—that hurts you. Backfires. So you say stuff like forced busing, states' rights, and all that stuff. You're getting so abstract now you're talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you're talking about are totally economic things and a by-product of them is blacks get hurt worse than whites. And subconsciously maybe that is part of it.

More recently still, David Horowitz has encouraged conservative students "to use the language that the left has deployed so effectively on behalf of its own agendas. Radical professors have created a 'hostile learning environment' for conservative students. . . . The university should be an 'inclusive' and intellectually 'diverse' community."

At other times, the education of the conservative is unknowing, happening, as it were, behind his back. By resisting and thus engaging with the progressive argument day after day, he comes to be influenced, often in spite of himself, by the very movement he opposes. After years of opposing the women's movement, for example, Phyllis Schlafly seemed genuinely incapable of conjuring the prefeminist view of women as deferential wives and mothers. Instead, she celebrated the activist "power of the positive woman." As if borrowing a page from *The Feminine Mystique*, she railed against the meaninglessness and lack of fulfillment among American women, only she blamed these ills on feminism rather than sexism.

But what the conservative ultimately learns from his opponents is the power of agency and the potency of the mass. The trauma of revolution teaches conservatives that men and women, whether through willed acts of force or some other exercise of human volition, can order social relationships and political time. Whereas the conservatives' predecessors in the old regime thought of inequality as a naturally occurring phenomenon, an inheritance passed on from generation to generation, their encounter with revolution shows them that the revolutionaries were right after all: inequality is a human creation. And if it can be uncreated by men and women, it can be re-created by men and women. Coming out of his confrontation with the revolution, the conservative voices the kind of affirmation of agency one finds in a 1957 editorial from William F. Buckley's *National Review*: "The central question that emerges" from the civil rights movement "is whether the White community in the South is entitled to take such measures as are necessary to prevail, politically and culturally, in areas in which it does not predominate numerically? The sobering answer is *Yes*—the White community is so entitled because, for the time being, it is the advanced race."

The revolutionary declares the Year I, and in response the conservative declares the Year Negative I. He demonstrates a belief in the power of men and women to shape history and to propel it forward—or backward. Even when the conservative claims to be preserving a present that's threatened or recovering a past that's lost, he is compelled by his own activism to confess that he's making a new beginning and creating the future. Burke took special pains to remind his comrades that whatever was rebuilt in France after the restoration would inevitably, as he put it in a letter to an émigré, "be in some measure a new thing." Or as Barry Goldwater said, "Our future, like our past, will be what we make it."

From the revolution, conservatives also develop a taste and talent for the masses, mobilizing the street for spectacular displays of power while making sure that power is never truly shared or redistributed. That is the task of right-

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND STEVEN KASHER GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY

*"Janus Mask, Nkim Village, Nigeria," a photograph by Phyllis Galembo, from* Maske, *a monograph published in October by Chris Boot. Galembo's work was on view in October at the Contemporary Arts Center, in New Orleans.*

wing populism: to appeal to the mass without disrupting the power of elites or, more precisely, to harness the energy of the mass in order to reinforce or restore the power of elites. Far from being a recent innovation of the Christian right or the Tea Party movement, reactionary populism runs like a thread throughout conservative discourse from its inception. Maistre was a pioneer in the theater of mass power, imagining scenes and staging dramas in which the lowest of the low could see themselves reflected in the highest of the high. "Monarchy is," he writes, "without contradiction, the form of government that gives the most distinction to the greatest number of persons." Ordinary people "share" in its "brilliance," though not, Maistre is careful to add, in its decisions and deliberations: "man is honored not as an agent but as a *portion* of sovereignty." When Maistre imagines the triumph of the counterrevolution, he takes care to emphasize the populist credentials of the returning monarch. The people should identify with this new king, says Maistre, because like them he has attended the "terrible school of misfortune" and suffered in the "hard school of adversity." He is "human," with humanness here connoting an almost pedestrian, and reassuring, capacity for error. He will be like them. Unlike

[Game]

# GOLDEN PARACHUTES AND LADDERS

*From "News Flash" playing cards for Billionaire Tycoon, a British board game released in September. The game's premise is: "You were once a successful business tycoon and you lost your empire in the recession." Each player is given a "100,000k" loan and competes to become the wealthiest. Players also pick "People Cards," which give them access to such influential figures as Judge, Mafia Boss, Politician, and Sheikh. A luxury edition of the game, made from Swedish and Italian leather, is available for almost $8,000.*

One of your oil rigs explodes, causing permanent damage to a coral reef. You are fined heavily by the government. Lose 100m.

The government launches a massive bailout plan aimed at injecting capital into the financial system. Earn 200,000k.

As tensions rise in the Middle East, your journalists are kidnapped from their armored car at gunpoint by an unknown mob. Lose 20m.

Hijackers take over a cargo ship; your products have been stolen. Lose 50,000k.

New green-energy research is announced and oil prices plunge. Lose 50m.

You are being investigated for tax fraud. Miss your next turn.

The global rich list has been published, and you have won first place in your sector. Your company's share price increases. Earn 100m.

Your CEO is sentenced to eight years in prison for taking 2.4m in bribes from military contractors in exchange for government contracts. Lose any five entrepreneur businesses.

Over 30,000 auto workers strike when contract negotiations over wages and benefits reach a stalemate. Lose 50m.

Fed cuts interest rates in an attempt to bring stability to the economy, which has been rocked by turbulence in the housing and financial markets. Earn 90,000k.

Military police shoot at crowds in a demonstration and arrest monks. The brutality of the attacks sparks international outrage. Lose Politician or 50m.

Donkey flu has killed thousands; pharmacy orders have shot up. Earn 200,000k.

Tsunami strikes and your private island sinks into the ocean. Lose private island resort and 200m.

You get divorced. Lose half your cash.

his predecessors, he will know it, which "is a great deal."

But to appreciate fully the inventiveness of right-wing populism, we have to look to the master class of the Old South. The slaveholder created a quintessentially American form of democratic feudalism, turning the white majority into a lordly class, sharing in the privileges and prerogatives of governing the slave class. Slaveholders are "not an exclusive aristocracy," wrote Daniel Hundley in *Social Relations in Our Southern States*. "Every free white man in the whole Union has just as much right to become an Oligarch." This was not just propaganda: by 1860, James Oakes reminds us in *The Ruling Race*, there were 400,000 slaveholders in the South, making the American master class one of the most democratic in the world. In the words of Calhoun: "With us the two great divisions of society are not the rich and poor, but white and black; and all the former, the poor as well as the rich, belong to the upper class, and are respected and treated as equals."

These populist currents can help us make sense of a final element of conservatism: its appeal to and reliance on outsiders. Maistre was from Savoy, Burke from Ireland. Alexander Hamilton was born out of wedlock in Nevis and rumored to be part black. Disraeli was a Jew, as are virtually all the neoconservatives who helped transform the G.O.P. from a cocktail party in Darien to the party of Scalia, D'Souza, Gonzales, and Yoo. Conservatism not only has depended on outsiders but has also seen itself as the voice of the outsider. From Burke's cry that "the gallery is in the place of the house" to Buckley's complaint that the modern conservative is "out of place," the conservative has served as a tribune for the displaced, his movement a conveyance of their grievances. Far from being an invention of the politically correct, victimhood has been a talking point of the right ever since Burke decried the mob's treatment of Marie Antoinette. The conservative, to be sure, speaks for a special type of victim: one who has lost something of value, as opposed to the wretched of the earth, whose chief complaint is that they never had anything to lose. His constituency is the contingently dispossessed—William Graham Sumner's "Forgotten Man"—rather than the preternaturally oppressed. This brand of victimhood endows the conservative complaint with a more universal significance. It connects his disinheritance to an experience we all share—loss—and weaves that experience into an ideology promising that what is lost can be restored.

People on the left often fail to realize this, but conservatism does indeed speak to and for people

who have lost something. The loss may be as material as a portion of one's income or as ethereal as a sense of standing. It may be of something that was never legitimately owned in the first place. Even so, nothing is ever so cherished as that which we no longer possess. It used to be one of the great virtues of the left that it alone understood the zero-sum nature of politics, wherein the gains of one class necessarily entail the losses of another. But as that sense of conflict diminishes on the left, it has fallen to the right to remind voters that there really are losers in politics and that it is they—and only they—who speak for them. Conservatism is not the Party of Order, as Mill and others have claimed, but the Party of Loss.

The chief aim of the loser is not preservation or protection but recovery and restoration, and that is the secret of conservatism's success. Because his losses are recent, the conservative can credibly claim that his goals are practical and achievable. He merely seeks to regain what is his; the fact that he once had it suggests he is capable of possessing it again. Whereas the left's program of redistribution raises the question of whether its beneficiaries are truly prepared to wield the powers they seek, the conservative project of restoration suffers from no such challenge. Unlike the revolutionary, moreover, who faces the nearly impossible task of empowering the powerless, the conservative asks his followers to do more of what they have always done. As a result, his counterrevolution will not require the same violence and disruption that the revolution has visited on the country. "Four or five persons, perhaps," writes Maistre, "will give France a king."

For some, perhaps many, in the conservative movement, this knowledge comes as a source of relief: their sacrifice will be small, their reward great. For others, it is a source of bitter disappointment. To this small subset of activists and militants, the battle is all. To learn that it soon will be over and will not require so much from them is enough to prompt a complex of despair: disgust over the shabbiness of their effort, grief over the disappearance of their foe, anxiety over their enforced early retirement. As Irving Kristol complained after the end of the Cold War, the defeat of the Soviet Union "deprived" conservatives like himself "of an enemy," and "in politics, being deprived of an enemy is a very serious matter. You tend to get relaxed and dispirited. Turn inward." Depression haunts conservatism as surely as does great wealth. But again, far from diminishing the appeal of conservatism, this darker dimension only enhances it. Onstage, the conservative waxes Byronic, moodily surveying the sum of his losses before an audience of the lovelorn and the starstruck. Offstage, and out of sight, his managers quietly compile the sum of their gains.

[Conversation]

# STATUS UPDATE

*From a February Facebook chat between Christopher Winfield and his son Adam, an Army specialist with a Stryker Brigade Combat Team in Afghanistan. According to Army investigators, two more Afghan civilians were murdered by Spc. Winfield's platoon after the chat took place. In September, Winfield was arrested along with eleven other platoon members and has since been charged with murder in connection with the third civilian death. The conversation was obtained through Winfield's lawyer.*

ADAM WINFIELD: Hey.

CHRISTOPHER WINFIELD: What up?

A.W.: Did you read the message I sent?

C.W.: No. Just got home.

A.W.: Read it in private. I only want you and Mom to know about this right now.

C.W.: So are you in trouble now or is it over with?

A.W.: I'm not in trouble. I just lost all and any authority I had. I'm not concerned about my job right now or the promotion board. Did you not understand what I just told you what people did in my platoon?

C.W.: Murder.

A.W.: Yeah, an innocent dude. They planned and went through with it. I knew about it. Didn't believe they were going to do it. Then it happened. Pretty much the whole platoon knows about it. It's OK with all of them pretty much. Except me. I want to do something about it. The only problem is I don't feel safe here telling anyone. The guy who did it is the golden boy in the company who can never do anything wrong and it's my word against theirs.

C.W.: Was it an Afghan they killed?

A.W.: Yes. Some innocent guy about my age just farming. They made it look like the guy threw a grenade at them and mowed him down. I was on the Stryker and wasn't on the ground when it took place. But I know they did it because they told me. Everyone pretty much knows it was staged. If I say anything it's my word against everyone. There's no one in this platoon that agrees this was wrong. They all don't care.

C.W.: OK, wow, you are not in a position to say anything to anybody. You don't know who to trust. I think maybe I need to call a senator's office and talk to them without mentioning names. I don't want you to get hurt from this. Let me think this through, OK? Also, were you demoted? Or did you step down from your position?

A.W.: I stepped down. I cannot be a leader in a platoon that allows this to happen. I cannot work for my squad leader who punishes me for leaving a Stryker unlocked and gives high

© JARED MOOSSY/REDUX

*An untitled photograph from Nuristan province, Afghanistan, by Jared Moossy, exhibited in February at Norwood Flynn Gallery, in Dallas.*

fives to the guy who kills innocent people and plans more with him. That's why I quit my job. I think if I go to the chaplain I might be fine. But if I do this I want to be as far away from my platoon as I can. There's a rumor going around that I'm going to talk and the threats are already coming my way.

C.W.: Do this. Tell them that you will not tell. Just ask for a transfer or something. Assure them you won't tell. Let me do something.

A.W.: It doesn't work that way. You can't just ask to move. We are already shorthanded as it is. I'm on the shit list in my platoon for quitting, and my chain of command won't move me if I ask.

C.W.: Just tell them you want nothing to do with what they do. Make them believe that it's water past the bridge. I will talk to someone without mentioning our names and ask for help getting you out of there.

A.W.: I'm on the bottom of the totem pole again and the guy that did this has the platoon in his pocket, so he will catch wind of any sort of investigation before I would even know about it, and if I just start packing my stuff one day, that's it. I'm caught.

C.W.: I know. Don't do anything until I figure out what to do. You must make them believe you are on their side.

A.W.: Well, I think they think I won't say anything. I was going to keep my mouth shut but they fucked with the wrong guy this time. I've about had it with this Army. Last night I was so mad I almost quit altogether and told them I refuse to go on missions with them but they would really get me in trouble then.

C.W.: Four months left. You will make it through. We will work on this problem too.

A.W.: Well, if you talk to anyone on my behalf I have proof that they are planning another one in the form of an AK-47 they want to drop on a guy.

C.W.: How many are involved?

A.W.: Well, it was two guys who did it, actually killed the dude. But the whole platoon knew about it for the most part. I think our platoon leader doesn't know and maybe like two dudes. Everyone just wants to kill people at any cost. They don't care. The Army is full of a bunch of scumbags I realized.

[Testimony]

# THE BATTLE OF CRUMMIES CREEK

*From interviews included in* They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History, *by Alessandro Portelli, published last month by Oxford University Press. On April 15, 1941, during a national coal miners' strike, four striking miners entered the company store at the Crummies Creek Coal Co., in Harlan County, Kentucky, and were killed by a mine employee with a machine gun. Locals have long claimed, though it has never been confirmed, that an ensuing gunfight resulted in additional deaths on both sides.*

GRANNY HAGER: Crummies Creek. Now, there was killing there and I can't tell you just how many were killed. You see, I used to have all of that down, but it got washed away so many times, and burned out. I don't know all that did happen, but they really had a battle up there. I think there was five killed. They wanted the scabs to go on to work, and they wanted to run the union men away, you see. And that is what started the battle. Now that was the roughest place we had in Harlan County.

PLENNIE HALL: The day before the battle, I went into the office and I told Mr. Johnson, "Mr. Johnson," I says, "won't you sign the union? It would be good for everybody, to be satisfied with everything." And he said, "Hell no"; he wouldn't under no circumstances. And the next day, the union come up there to stop them from working.

BECKY SIMPSON: Six years old. Me and my mother always walked from Cranks Creek to Crummies to the commissary with my dad's paycheck. They had a bunch of pickets up at the commissary. This big bald-headed guy, they called him Big Jim Black Hair, he was a big-league ballplayer, he told my mother, "What're you doing here with this child today? Get what little you're going to and get this child back out, there's gon' be trouble today." As we was leaving the commissary, they was rolling up these big machine guns, that they could open up the double doors and shoot out. So me and Mommy is walking back up the mountain, we heared the shooting start. And they just mowed the men down.

BEN CAMPAGNARI: Now, we were running, and we had a pegleg man. You wouldn't believe it. Going down that railroad track, and he's hitting about four ties at a time; and he outrun half of the people that had good legs, and we was all a-running because they was cutting down with the machine gun, or trying to. And I said: "If I ever go on a picket line again, I'll go with protection." We died just like ducks.

HAZEL LEONARD: And that night, the thugs that lived, they carried all their dead men out of there and hauled them to the top of Crummies mountain, and burned them up. There was a place there, that they called the Halfway House, it was just a dive, you know, just for men to drink and hang out at. And they sold booze and everything, you know what I mean. So they hauled all these people out there, that had got killed that night—the thugs. They hauled them up that mountain to that place and then they burned it. They burned them up.

PLENNIE HALL: Three weeks later I was over there getting a payday, and there was a drainpipe runs down there, and somebody that crawled in that drainpipe and died, the dogs pulled out some of his bones. There never was no more said about it. I wondered about who that could have been, or where they were from.

[Script]

# REBORN TO BE WILD

*From the unproduced screenplay "Easy Ridin' in Biker Heaven," by Terry Southern, Nelson Lyon, and Michael O'Donoghue, a sequel to* Easy Rider, *to be included in a forthcoming collection of Southern's screenplays. A hundred years after the deaths of Billy and Captain America, the United States is a wasteland in the aftermath of a nuclear explosion, and long-dead bikers now happily ride their motorcycles, drink, and have sex in Biker Heaven. But when the Leader realizes what has happened, he decides the survivors must be given the Gadsden American flag ("the original American flag") to restore their patriotism. He chooses for the mission Billy and Captain America ("the two bikers who loved America more than life itself"), who are still half-buried off the highway where they were killed at the end of* Easy Rider. *In the scene below, the Leader has just resurrected the two, and Billy awakes still muttering his last words.*

BILLY: I'm gonna get 'em, man. I'm gonna—
CAPTAIN AMERICA: [*To the Leader*] Who are you?
BILLY: Hey, man, where are we?
*They stiffly get to their feet, brushing themselves off.*
THE LEADER: What's the last thing you remember?
BILLY: I flipped some loony redneck the bird.
And then . . .
*Billy is confused. He can't quite remember his own demise.*

CAPTAIN AMERICA: He shot you, Billy. He shot you, and I was riding for help when . . . [*Fades away, unable to recall*]

THE LEADER: Don't you remember? [*With a hypnotic gesture, he causes their eyes to close*] You closed your eyes and you dreamed that you were water and wind. Stone and star. Sand and silence.

*They open their eyes. Now they remember.*

BILLY: Oh yeah. Peyote City is mighty pretty! Far out! Hey, who's got the weed?

CAPTAIN AMERICA: [*Nodding*] I remember . . .

*As awareness of death and resurrection sinks in, Billy goes crazy with the joy of renewed life, dancing, grabbing Captain America, etc.*

BILLY: They thought they got me! The fuckin' *rednecks! Ha! I'm still alive!*

CAPTAIN AMERICA: [*Remains serene, with a half-smile; to the Leader*] *You* brought us back?

THE LEADER: Right.

BILLY: [*With clenched-teeth determination*] Soon as I can lay my hands on a piece, I'm gonna light up those cocksuckers! I mean we're talkin' *sieve-o-roonie!*

CAPTAIN AMERICA: [*To the Leader*] We owe you one.

BILLY: [*Half to himself, still preoccupied*] They'll be sorry they ever tried to fuck me over!

THE LEADER: You're a little late, Billy.

CAPTAIN AMERICA: How late?

THE LEADER: Exactly one century.

BILLY: [*Querulous tone*] What're you, outta your bird?!? *One century!?!*

THE LEADER: [*Throws his arms over their shoulders*] Let's take a walk, and I'll tell you what you slept through.

*Long shot of them walking down center of deserted highway, the Leader explaining, Captain America calm, Billy reacting with shock and disbelief. Music: plaintive, sad, sense-of-loss American music. Cut to angle of the road as the three approach. Their speech indistinct. Music ends.*

BILLY: Man, if this country is as fucked-up as you say . . . Christ, maybe we were better off dead.

THE LEADER: Maybe. But you were chosen.

CAPTAIN AMERICA: Chosen? Chosen for what?

BILLY: [*Irate*] Whatta you mean, "chosen"? We ain't exactly of that particular persuasion, hoss—if you catch my drift.

*The Leader stops near camera and unfurls the Gadsden American flag, filling the frame.*

THE LEADER: Billy, don't you understand? You guys really *believed* in the American Dream! You said, "Let's go for it! Let's go for it!" And you did! We're talking Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer! You two are the greatest American folk heroes of the twentieth century! And we want you to take the new American flag to the president of the United States!

BILLY: The prez?!? You gotta be kiddin'! I mean I don't care *who's* the prez now, they're all alike—they're *politicians*! They're *corrupt*! They're *liars*! They're *hypocrites*! *They're all on the take!*

THE LEADER: This one may be different. At least that's what people are saying.

BILLY: [*Not listening*] Anyway, I don't *believe* in *flags*! [*Grabs himself by the shoulders*] This is *my* flag, hoss! This is the only flag *I* believe in! *My fuckin' skin!*

THE LEADER: [*Gently, wisely*] For *you* perhaps, Billy, but for countless other people—the *little* people, Billy—the flag represents the *dream*, the *promise*, and the *hope*. [*To both*] The dreamer may die, but the dream is *immortal*. Give them back that dream, bikers—give them their new *flag*. Will you do it?

[Exhumation]

## ALAS, POOR SIMÓN

*From Twitter messages posted by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, shortly after midnight on July 16, as Chávez and a group of government officials and scientists disinterred the remains of Simón Bolívar from his tomb in Caracas, in order to prove that the nineteenth-century revolutionary leader died from arsenic poisoning, not tuberculosis as is widely believed. Translated from the Spanish by Wes Enzinna.*

Hi, my friends! What stirring moments we've experienced tonight! We've seen the remains of the Great Bolívar!

I say with Neruda: "Our Father who art on earth, in the waters, in the air . . . You arise each one hundred years, when the people rise."

This glorious skeleton must be Bolívar because his flame can be felt. My God.

My God, my God . . . My Christ, our Christ . . . while I prayed in silence upon seeing those bones, I thought of you!

Bolívar lives, damn it!! We are his flame!!

*Caramba!* What a lot of people there are awake at this hour. How you make me strong, you Bolivarian Patriots!

Now we must rest a little. To continue the battle for the homeland. Bolívar lives! The struggle continues!! Good day to you all!!

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND L. NOWLIN GALLERY, AUSTIN, TEXAS

*"Llano, Texas, 2008—No. 4," a photograph by Lance Rosenfield, was shown in October at Fotografia Festival Internazionale, in Rome.*

CAPTAIN AMERICA: [*Solemnly*] We'll do it—or we'll die trying. Right, Billy?

BILLY: [*Sighs, shrugs, feigns a cracker accent*] Well, ah guess it beats fuckin' a mudhole! [*Laughs coarsely*] Haw-haw-haw! [*Grins maniacally*] Ah reck-tum! Haw! Where's the J.D.?

CAPTAIN AMERICA: What about wheels?

*The Leader raises the flag with a magician's flourish, revealing two sensational motorcycles. Captain America's bike is in the colors of the Gadsden flag and has a glittering-eyed rattlesnake painted on the tank. Billy's bike is a sleek machine in a combination finish of mirror and fluorescence.*

BILLY: [*Enthusiastically*] Hey, far-fuckin'-out!

*They look over the bikes. The Leader folds the flag.*

THE LEADER: [*To Captain America*] How do you feel?

CAPTAIN AMERICA: I'm still cold.

*The Leader hands him a jacket with a miniature of the Gadsden flag sewn on the back, and other clothes for Billy.*

THE LEADER: Put these on.

*Close up, the Leader. Camera pulls back to reveal: countryside, U.S.A. The three of them are there, the Leader sucking a wildflower, then absentmindedly plucking the petals from it. Extreme close-up, his hands on the flower, each finger encircled by an identical death's-head ring. Cut to: His face, intense as he looks up at Billy and Captain America.*

THE LEADER: God, how I *envy* you two. The *risk*, the *uncertainty*. Where I come from, there is *no* uncertainty, no *doubt*, and no *fear*. But only *doubt* can take you to the edge—and only *fear* can make you ride it.

*They continue to get dressed.*

CAPTAIN AMERICA: [*Puzzled*] Say, just who *are* you?

THE LEADER: [*Tossing the flower aside*] I *am* the edge.

BILLY: [*Grinning and nodding*] I can dig it.

THE LEADER: Okay, fire 'em up.

*Billy and Captain America mount bikes and kick-start them. Extreme close-up montage of details: kick-starting bikes, twisting the throttle, the exhaust, etc. Another angle, the Leader stands facing them. In background, their bikes are standing, facing endless empty highway. He hands the flag to Captain America, who tucks it inside his jacket.*

THE LEADER: Good luck.

*Billy and Captain America share a "Let's go for it" look and roar off down the highway, with the music up.*

[Exchange]
# LE PETIT SOLD-OUT

*From emails exchanged on August 27 about an unauthorized screening of Jean-Luc Godard's* Film Socialisme *scheduled for that evening at the New York City activist art organization 16 Beaver Group in collaboration with the film collective Red Channels. On August 23, Scott Foundas, an organizer of the New York Film Festival, which was hosting the film's official U.S. premiere, demanded that the 16 Beaver screening be canceled and notified the film's international distributor, Wild Bunch. Vincent Maraval is a producer as well as a sales agent for Wild Bunch.*

Dear Scott,

As a co-organizer of 16 Beaver Group, I was forwarded your recent emails. I have to say I was alarmed by the arrogant and legalistic tone of your email. At screenings like this we are invested in having a productive and in-depth discussion that takes seriously cinema as a political project—the kind of treatment for which *Film Socialisme* seems to call.

We had no idea that *Film Socialisme* was considered a commercial project. We had planned a screening before your lineup was announced. We planned to screen a digital file, for free, which has been made available (not through us) for free for some months now. It was my impression that this mode of circulation had been encouraged by the filmmaker. Given our cultural cachet among a younger set of filmgoers, such a screening would facilitate a renewed interest in the recent work of the Great Master, perhaps making Godard cool and relevant again. I would suggest that were you in a different mood about this matter, the NYFF and Wild Bunch should be thanking us for providing this free service. Our screening has been canceled, but since you have demanded proof, we request that you, Scott Foundas, come to 16 Beaver to discuss why the screening cannot take place. Within this discussion, we would hope to hear a specific application of intellectual-property law to *Film Socialisme,* perhaps even a close reading of the final scene. I imagine you've seen it? The last lines of the film fading in over an FBI copyright warning, QUAND LA LOI N'EST PAS JUSTE, PASSE AVANT LA LOI . . . NO COMMENT.

We would also be interested in hearing about different modes of writing about film—how does one go from film criticism to legal threats, and what does that feel like? We have been holding talks and discussions for many years about the cultural dimensions of economic neoliberalism. These questions of institution and professionalization are of great interest to us. We would like to hold this event, "Socialisme Will Not Take Place," sometime prior to the festival.

Best Regards,
Benj Gerdes

Dear Sir,

The problem is that you seem considering that films belong to you and you ignore the copyrights. For films to be made, we need money and against money copyrights. Jean-Luc never encouraged his films to be seen for free. He never encouraged piracy. Jean-Luc just says that we should not pay rights for using footages of other films because while authors have rights they also have obligations, obligations to make available their footages for other artists. I know by heart

[Denial]
# FURRY LOGIC

*From a memorandum issued in August by Judge Ronald Folino of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Forty-four-year-old Gary Guy Mathews is a self-described "furry," or a person who identifies with a specific animal, and often wears a dog costume.*

Mr. Mathews seeks to change his name to "Boomer the Dog." In his petition, Mathews states: "I've been known as Boomer the Dog by friends in the community for more than 20 years. I want to bring my legal name in line with that." It is easy to see that the proposed name is likely to result in confusion in the marketplace, business records, and public documents. Moreover, the proposed name change would have unintended consequences, putting the public welfare at risk. Consider the following example: petitioner witnesses a serious automobile accident and telephones for an emergency medical response. The dispatcher queries as to the caller's identity, and the caller responds, "This is Boomer the Dog." It is not a stretch to imagine the telephone dispatcher concluding that the call is a prank and refusing therefore to send an emergency medical response. I am denying petitioner's request. Although petitioner apparently wishes it were otherwise, the simple fact remains that he is not a dog.

the position of people like you, which is to deny property for your personal use but you big generosity to make GODARD relevant stops when it comes to remunerate the author himself. Quentin TARANTINO called his company A BAND APART in tribute to GODARD. A journalist asked GODARD what he was thinking about TARANTINO admiration and he replied, "I don't give a shit, I would prefer him to give me money," but of course he let him call his company that way without asking for anything.

So, we thank you for your attempt to "make GODARD relevant" but we work on that since many years now with the support of national distributors worldwide and festivals that bring us advertisement and high-profile screenings, and I even have the feeling that the announcement of his career OSCAR for next November has nothing to do with the announcement of your screening through a "file made available." I would have liked to come to explain to your viewers what piracy is and comment on your political statement that makes everything available for free because QUAND LA LOI EST INJUSTE, LA JUSTICE PASSE AVANT LA LOI but I can't be there as I will be in Venice and Toronto trying to exploit and run a commercial operation. I hope we can find you a better material than a file next year and screen FILM SOCIALISME to your friends and debate about the possibility of leaving with your projector and your TV screen.

Best Regards,
Vincent Maraval

[Mea Culpa]

# NOTHING BUT REGRET

*From an August 2003 letter written by James Jae Lee as part of a plea bargain on a charge of smuggling an illegal immigrant across the United States–Mexico border, for which Lee was sentenced to eighteen months in prison. In September, Lee was shot and killed by police after taking hostages at the Discovery Channel headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.*

Your Honor,

I just wanted to write to you on my own behalf as to what I have done before you sentence me.

My life seemed over. After years and years of dead-end jobs, failed attempts at a normal life, trying in vain to give some meaning to my life, only to end up disillusioned and cynical. Severely depressed and feeling down, there I was in a Tijuana hotel being further subjected to more of life's brutality. I was just finished being choked and robbed. Then they offered me work. I had nothing left, so I tried it. I started to smuggle people for them.

For one brief moment in my whole worthless life I felt good about myself. I felt like I was really helping people. I have never saved a person's life, but it felt the same as I imagine it would have felt. For once my life seemed to actually benefit the lives of others.

That feeling quickly eroded to a deep shame and an awakened sense of guilt. Every day I wake up to sadness and depression. I know I was wrong. And I now know how dangerous smuggling can be. I feel nothing but regret. Life has been a nightmare for me, a living, breathing nightmare.

Looking at my life through my probation report shows a bad family relationship, a string of dead-end jobs, few friends, and no personal relationships or offspring. You won't receive a touching letter from a little girl begging for mercy for her daddy. No such person exists. Nor will a deluge of letters come from distraught family members. No one cares. Nor will there be an overload of letters of support from personal friends. I have no friends. After thirty-six years of my life, I have absolutely nothing to show for it.

But I would like you to consider how this part is a positive reflection on me. If I had children, I would be a bad father, so isn't it good that I never had any? As for family, all I can say is that I avoid them to preserve my sanity. I think that they are better off without me in their lives. As to any friends, I have been and always will be a loner. My life as a child consisted of being alone in my room drawing pictures out of comic books. Needless to say this didn't help me to develop any good social habits.

This is the only good thing about me: I can draw. But if knowing how to draw is all it took, I would be successful today. In my experience, I have found that it is not. Enclosed are samples of my best portraits. I can complete one in about fifteen to twenty minutes. My goal is to be able to complete an oil portrait in thirty minutes to an hour in various styles of different masters. I would really appreciate it if you sent me somewhere I could paint with oils and acrylics. When I get out I am going to try to do that for a living. I already have several referrals to find work doing portraits at fairs and tattoo shops.

When I get out of prison, I undoubtedly will have the same personality traits as I had before. I wish I could point a finger at someone or something and magically be someone else. But I can't. My goal in life is to stay out of prison and live life with as little pain as possible. I

don't know if my life will end with a happy ending, but all I ask is for an ending that is not in prison.

Sincerely,
James Lee

[Fiction]

# ONE NIGHT OF LOVE

*By Javier Marías, from the story collection* While the Women Are Sleeping, *out last month from New Directions. Translated from the Spanish by Margaret Jull Costa.*

My sex life with my wife, Marta, is most unsatisfactory. My wife is neither very lascivious nor very imaginative, she never whispers sweet nothings and usually yawns whenever I happen to be in the mood. That's why I occasionally go to prostitutes, but even they have grown increasingly nervous as well as increasingly expensive, and monotonous too, not to mention unenthusiastic. I would much prefer it if my wife, Marta, were more lascivious and imaginative and that I could be satisfied with her alone. I was happy on the one night when she did satisfy me.

Among the things my father left me when he died is a packet of letters that still gives off a faint whiff of cologne. I don't believe the sender actually perfumed the letter herself, but rather, I assume that, at some point in his life, my father kept the letters near a bottle of cologne that one day spilled onto them. You can still see the stain, and so the smell is clearly that of the cologne my father both used and didn't use (given that the contents were spilled), and not that of the woman who sent him the letters. Moreover, the smell is characteristic of him, a smell I knew very well, which never changed and which I've never forgotten, the same throughout my childhood and adolescence and a good part of my youth, an age in which I am still installed or have not yet abandoned. That is why, before age diminished my interest in things amorous or passionate, I decided to read the letters he bequeathed to me and about which, up until then, I had felt no curiosity at all.

The letters were written by a woman who was and still is called Mercedes. She wrote in black ink on blue paper. Her handwriting is large and maternal, made with rapid strokes of the pen, as if she no longer aspired to making an impression, doubtless aware that she had already caused an impression that would last forever. It's as if the letters had been written by someone who had already died, like letters from beyond the grave. I can't help thinking that it was some kind of game, one of those games of which children and lovers are so fond, and that consist basically in pretending to be what you're not, or, put another way, in giving each other fictitious names and creating fictitious lives, afraid perhaps (this applies to lovers, not children) that their overpowering feelings will destroy them if they admit that they, with their real lives and names, are the people having those feelings. It's a way of blunting the most passionate and most intense of emotions, pretending that the whole thing is happening to someone else; it's also the best way of observing it, of being an aware spectator. Yes, experiencing it and, at the same time, being aware of it.

The woman who signed herself Mercedes had opted for the fiction of sending her love to my father after she had already died, and so convinced was she of the eternal place and time she occupied while writing them (or so sure that the addressee would accept this convention) that she appeared entirely unconcerned by the fact that she had to entrust her envelopes to the postbox or that they bore the normal stamps and postmarks of the city of Gijón. They were all dated, and the only thing missing was a return address, but that is more or less obligatory in any semiclandestine affair (the letters all belong to the period of my father's widowhood, but he never spoke to me of this late passion). Nor is there anything unusual about the existence of this correspondence—though I have no idea whether my father replied in the usual way—for there is nothing more commonplace than widowers in sexual thrall to bold, fiery (or disillusioned) women. The declarations, promises, demands, reminiscences, outbursts, protests, exclamations, and obscenities (especially obscenities) that fill these letters are conventional enough and remarkable less for their style than for their audacity. None of this would be of any interest if, only a few days after deciding to open the packet and peruse the blue sheets with rather more equanimity than shock, I myself had not received a letter from that woman called Mercedes, of whom I couldn't say, She's still alive, because she seems to have been dead from the start.

Her letter was very proper, and she didn't presume a relationship with me simply because she had once been on intimate terms with my father, nor was she so vulgar as to translate her love for the father, now that he was dead, into an unhealthy love for his son, who was and is still alive and was and is still me. Seemingly completely unembarrassed that I should know about their relationship, she restricted herself

to setting before me an anxiety, a complaint and a demand for the presence of her lover, who, despite his repeated promises, had still not joined her six months after his death: he had failed to meet her in the place, or perhaps I should say time, agreed. This, in her view, could be put down to one of two reasons: a sudden, last-minute cooling of his affections at the moment of death that would have caused the deceased to break his promise, or his having been buried and not cremated (as he had requested), and which—according to Mercedes, who spoke of this as if it were the most natural thing in the world—could prevent or obstruct their eschatological meeting or reunion.

It was true that despite my father's request to be cremated, although he had not insisted on it (perhaps because he made this request only at the end, when his willpower was weakened), he had nevertheless been buried alongside my mother, because there was space for him in the family vault and Marta and I felt it was the appropriate, sensible, convenient thing to do. Mercedes's letter seemed to me a joke in the very worst taste. I threw it in the trash can and was even tempted to do the same with the old letters too. Like them, the new envelope bore fresh stamps and was postmarked in Gijón. It didn't smell of anything, though. I wasn't prepared to disinter my father's remains merely in order to set fire to them.

The next letter arrived soon afterward, and in it, Mercedes, as if she could read my thoughts, begged me to cremate my father because she could not go on living (that's what she said, go on living) in that state of uncertainty. Rather than continue waiting for him for all eternity, possibly in vain, she would prefer to know that my father had decided not to rejoin her. In this letter, she still addressed me with the formal *usted*. I can't deny that I was fleetingly moved (that is, while I was reading the letter, not afterward), but the conspicuous Asturias postmark was too prosaic for me to be able to see it as anything but a macabre joke. The second letter took its place in the trash can as well. My wife, Marta, saw me tearing it up and asked:

"What is it that's annoyed you so much?"

My gestures must have been somewhat violent.

"Oh, nothing," I said and carefully gathered up the pieces so that she wouldn't be able to put them back together again.

I waited for a third letter, which, precisely because I did wait for it, took longer than expected to arrive, or perhaps time spent waiting just seems longer. It was quite different from the previous letters and resembled those my father used to receive. Mercedes addressed me now with the familiar *tú*, and offered me her body, if not her soul. "You can do what you like with me," she said, "whatever you can imagine

[Poem]

## CARNAL EVENT ON CAMERA

*By Heather McHugh. McHugh's most recent collection of poems,* Upgraded to Serious, *was published last year by Copper Canyon Press.*

I
The matter goes down very far,
a slattern, while the pan goes up—

there's Sirius again, at the end
of his rope. To plan the situation, google

continent and counterpane. What hurts
in the john is the lower brain. It has its

miles of memory and some
anticipation too. Don't push.

Even animal pleasure has its edges:
universal measure (silly millipedes,

you need not run) went the way of
the flyswatter. O my favorite anapest—

you are a dactyl, after all—all but extinct.
Therefore my muses nurse you.

II
Shade from shutters, sun from cuts in the umbrella
fall upon you, to mercator your best surfaces,

your swells. Some stripes go straight
within. The star the earth can't get

enough of sends two stars into
your double-barreled sights; they flash

afloat in aquifers. The nerve-burst has
a spider caught—come come! The smile's

now right-side round.
The pattern goes up,

very far. Meanwhile
the man goes down.

or wouldn't even dare to imagine doing to someone else. If you grant my plea to disinter and cremate your father and allow him to rejoin me, you will never forget me for as long as you live, not even when you die, because I will gobble you up, and you will gobble me up." I believe I blushed when I read this the first time, and for a fraction of a second I toyed with the idea of going straight to Gijón to offer myself to her (I'm drawn to the weird and the dirty in sex). But then I immediately thought: "How absurd. I don't even know her last name." That third letter, however, did not end up in the trash can. I still have it hidden away.

It was about then that Marta underwent a change of attitude. I don't mean that, from one day to the next, she stopped yawning and became a woman of unbridled passion, but she did begin to show a greater interest in and curiosity about me and my no longer very young body, as if she sensed an infidelity on my part and was on the alert, or as if she herself had been unfaithful and wanted to find out whether some newly discovered technique might be possible with me as well.

"Come here," she would say sometimes, and she had never made such overtures to me before. Or she would utter a few words, for example: "Yes, yes, now."

The third letter that had promised so much had left me waiting for a fourth letter even more anxiously than the second irritating letter had left me waiting for the third. But no fourth letter arrived, and I realized that I was beginning to wait for the mail each day with growing impatience. I noticed that my heart turned over whenever an envelope arrived bearing no return address, and then my eyes would glance rapidly at the postmark, to see if it was from Gijón. But no one ever writes from Gijón.

Months passed, and on All Souls' Day, Marta and I took flowers to my parents' grave, in which my grandparents and my sister are also buried.

"What will happen to *us,* do you think?" I said to Marta, as we breathed in the clean cemetery air from a bench close to our family vault. I was smoking a cigarette, and she was studying her nails, holding her spread fingers some distance from her, like someone urging a crowd to remain calm. "I mean, when we die. There's no room here now."

"The things you think about."

I gazed off into the distance in order to give myself an appropriately dreamy air that would justify what I was about to say, and I said:

"I'd like to be buried. Burial is more suggestive of repose than cremation. My father wanted to be cremated, do you remember, and we didn't do what he wanted. We should have, I think. It would bother me to think that my wish to be buried were ignored. What do you think? I'm thinking we ought to disinter him. That way, there'd be room for me when I die. You could go to your parents' vault."

"Let's get out of here. You're beginning to give me the creeps."

We set off among the graves, toward the exit. It was sunny. But we had only gone a few steps when I stopped, looked at the tip of my cigarette, and said:

"Don't you think we should cremate him?"

"Do what you like, but let's get out of here."

I threw down my cigarette and buried it in the ground with my foot.

Marta refused to attend the ceremony, an emotionless affair of which I was the sole witness. My father's remains went from being vaguely recognizable in his coffin to being entirely unrecognizable in an urn. It didn't seem to me necessary to scatter the ashes. and besides, that's not allowed.

When I got home, late, I felt quite depressed; I sat down in my armchair without taking off my coat or turning on the light and stayed there, waiting, musing, thinking, perhaps recovering from the responsibility and the effort of having done something I should have done some time ago, of having fulfilled a wish (someone else's wish), while, in the background, I could hear distant sounds of Marta taking a shower. After a while, my wife, Marta, emerged from the bathroom wearing her pink robe and with her hair still wet. She was lit from behind by the light from the still steamy bathroom. She sat down on the floor at my feet and rested her damp head on my lap. After a few seconds, I said:

"Shouldn't you dry yourself off? You're making my coat and trousers wet."

"I'm going to make all of you wet," she said and revealed that she was naked beneath her bathrobe. We were both now lit by the distant light from the bathroom.

That night, I was happy because my wife, Marta, was both lascivious and imaginative, whispering sweet nothings to me, and she didn't yawn once. In short, I was satisfied with her alone. I'll never forget that. It hasn't happened since. It was a night of love. No, it hasn't happened again.

A few days later, I received the long-awaited fourth letter. I still haven't dared to open it, and sometimes I feel tempted simply to tear it up and never read it. This is partly because I think I know and fear what the letter will say; unlike the previous three addressed to me, it smells slightly of cologne, a cologne I have not forgotten and that I know well. I haven't experienced another night of love, which is why, precisely because it hasn't happened again, I sometimes have the odd sense that, on that one night, I

COURTESY MCKEE GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY

Summerhouse, *acrylic paint, dowelling, hat veiling, paper, Plexiglas, and wood strip, by Lucy Williams, was on display in October at McKee Gallery, in New York City.*

betrayed my father, or that my wife, Marta, betrayed me with him (perhaps because we gave each other fictitious names and created lives that were not our own), although the truth is that on that night, in our apartment, in the dark, lying on her bathrobe, only Marta and I were there. Just Marta and me.

I haven't experienced another night of love, nor have I ever again felt that she alone could satisfy me, and so I still go to prostitutes, who are increasingly expensive and increasingly nervous. Perhaps I should try transvestites. Not that I really care, it doesn't worry me and won't last, although it might for a while. Sometimes I find myself thinking that, when the time comes, it would be easiest and most convenient if Marta were to die first, because that way I could bury her in the place in the vault that was left vacant. That way I wouldn't have to explain why I've changed my mind, because now I would prefer to be cremated; in fact, under no circumstances do I want to be buried. On the other hand—I surprise myself thinking—I don't know that I would gain much from that, because my father will have taken his place, my place, next to Mercedes, for all eternity. When I'm cremated—I surprise myself thinking—I'll have to bump off my father, although I don't know how you can bump off someone who's already dead. Sometimes I wonder whether the letter I haven't yet opened says something quite different from what I imagine and fear, whether it offers me a solution, whether she perhaps expresses a preference for me. Then I think: "How absurd. We've never even met." I look at the letter, sniff it, turning it over in my hands, and always end up hiding it away again, still unopened. ■

# WHICH WAY MADNESS LIES

## Can psychosis be prevented?

*By Rachel Aviv*

Anna did not simply decide one day that people were made of paper. She came to the conclusion slowly and reluctantly, several months after she first noticed that the consistency of everything around her had subtly changed. Books and chairs and buildings were no longer solid but composed of tiny, buzzing particles. She thought if she blew on a lamppost it should disperse into air. On her way to school every morning, she was perplexed by the implausibility of the process: that she could walk along the sidewalk, her boots pressed against the concrete, without falling through.

Anna had always been the kind of student who would do anything to please her teachers, and from a young age she had single-mindedly pursued a career as a scholar.[1] But by her first semester of graduate school three years ago, schoolwork had become daunting for the first time. She had studied Russian, German, and French, yet she found herself forgetting words she'd known for years. Even English no longer felt like a native language. She sometimes examined the appearance of words, the alignment of angles and curves on the page, until she lost sight of their meaning. Once, with her friends, she became so overwhelmed by the task of physically forming the sounds of words that she lost the ability to speak. She knew what she wanted to say, but she couldn't will herself to make such odd little noises.

I met Anna last year at her Illinois home, a small, brightly painted town-house apartment, and she tried to pinpoint when she had stopped believing in the reality she'd contentedly inhabited all her life. A petite twenty-eight-year-old with cleanly parted blond hair, she spoke in a thin, strained voice and avoided looking at me. My lips, she said, appeared as if they were moving at a different pace than my voice, and she had to bat away the thought that she was watching a dubbed film.

Anna's mother is schizophrenic, and Anna had always found her mother's worldview—derived in part from messages she deciphered in processed-food packaging—distasteful and impossible to comprehend. She assumed that when her mother had a schizophrenic break, the delusions had taken her by force, engulfing her. But an alternate

[1] *To protect patients' privacy, all names and a few identifying details have been changed.*

*Rachel Aviv is a recipient of the 2010 Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award. Her article "Like I Was Jesus" appeared in the August 2009 issue of* Harper's Magazine.

*Quem*, by Sebastiaan Bremer. Courtesy the artist

reality did not come to Anna fully formed. Throughout her first year of graduate school, she kept monitoring her own perceptions, wondering whether they didn't have some "tinge of unreality." She searched for a narrative that would explain why the world was being transformed. One day, wandering the halls of an academic department, she became fascinated by the physical details of the building: tiny cracks in the wall, a light switch, a rubber doorstop that looked luminous and functionless. A bust of Plato, which she had never noticed before, seemed to be calling out to her. As she gazed at Plato's mournful expression, she imagined that he had singled her out to unburden himself and shed light on the "overwhelming strangeness of the world."

But after she left campus and returned to her apartment that day, the electricity of her mood passed, and she wanted nothing to do with Plato's secrets. She blamed herself for attending too avidly to the stream of her own consciousness. "It wasn't as if this bust suddenly started talking to me out of thin air," she told me. "I wanted him to, and then I sort of convinced myself that he did. It didn't feel like I was passively being subjected to another reality. It felt like I somehow actively engaged in creating it."

Psychiatry has many names for the symptoms of florid psychoses but almost no language that describes the anomalous experiences that gradually lead up to this state. The psychoanalyst Harry Stack Sullivan, who worked with hundreds of people with schizophrenia, proclaimed as early as 1927, "I feel certain that many incipient cases might be arrested before the efficient contact with reality is completely suspended." But doctors had no means of finding and recruiting patients who were, for all intents and purposes, still healthy.

It is impossible to predict the precise moment when a person has embarked on a path toward madness, since there is no quantifiable point at which healthy thoughts become insane. It is only in retrospect that the prelude to psychosis can be diagnosed with certainty. Yet in the past decade, doctors have begun to trace the illness back to its earliest signs. The place where Anna receives therapy, the First Episode Psychosis Clinic at the University of Illinois Medical Center (she began treatment in April 2008, shortly after she noticed the particles surrounding her), is one of about sixty clinics in the United States that work to help people experiencing early psychotic symptoms maintain a grasp on reality. About a third of these programs focus exclusively on patients who appear to be in what is known as the prodrome, the aura that precedes a psychotic break by up to two or three years. During this phase, people often have mild hallucinations—they might spot a nonexistent cat out of the corner of their eye or hear their name in the sound of the wind—yet they doubt that these sensations are real. They still have "insight"—a pivotal word in psychiatric literature, indicating that a patient can recognize an altered worldview as a sign of illness, not a revelation.

By working with people when they are still skeptical of their own delusions, doctors hope to stop the disease before it has really begun. Three years ago, the results of a study of nearly 300 patients who sought treatment because of "recurring unusual thoughts," "unusual sensory experiences," or "increased suspiciousness" were published by the North American Prodrome Longitudinal Study, a collaboration of eight prodromal outpatient clinics. The researchers found that 35 percent of patients had a psychotic break within two and a half years of enrolling at a clinic.[2] (If symptoms continue, the patients will eventually be diagnosed with schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder.) This line of research may promise the closest thing there has ever been to a "cure" for psychosis, but because of the high false-positive rate, the work has been tempered by ethical dilemmas. Many psychiatrists worry that young patients will become fatalistic about their future and define themselves in relation to a chronic disease they may never develop. Yet once people have a full-blown psychotic episodes—the schizophrenia diagnosis requires a month of psychotic behavior—there may be irreversible changes in the brain. Studies have shown that the longer someone is unhinged from reality before getting treatment for the first time, the worse their long-term prognosis.

Based in part on the findings of the Prodrome Longitudinal Study, a new diagnosis, the psychosis risk syndrome, was proposed last year for the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (forthcoming in 2013), psychiatry's central reference text. Symptoms would include

> feeling perplexed, confused, or strange, thinking that the self, the world, and time has changed (often in ways that cannot be described), having ideas of reference that are not perceived as directly threatening to the individual, unusual ideas (about the body, guilt, nihilism), overvalued beliefs (about philosophy, religion, magic) …

Once patients believe in their delusions with full conviction, they are said to have crossed the threshold to psychosis—a process commonly called "conversion."

Although the *DSM* is written by the country's leading psychiatrists, the neurological mechanisms behind mental disorders are too poorly understood to have much bearing on the way the manual separates health from pathology. Instead, the fifty-eight-year-old book guides psychiatrists toward diagnoses with checklists of behavioral signs that require a "minimal amount of inference on the part of the observer" (according to the 1987 edition). The outer limits of normality are decided by committee, with definitions of illness deferring to consensus opinion. A "delusion," one of the five key symptoms listed for schizophrenia, is a "false belief … firmly sustained despite what almost everyone else believes." A "bizarre delusion," a more severe symptom, has gone

[2] *The others found that their symptoms passed or plateaued. For patients who used cannabis, amphetamines, opiates, or hallucinogens, the risk of psychosis rose to 43 percent.*

through numerous revisions. In one edition of the manual, it had to have "patently absurd" content with "no possible basis in fact"; in the next, it involved "a phenomenon that the person's culture would regard as totally implausible." After the revision, 10 percent of patients who were previously deemed schizophrenic were given a new diagnosis, the majority of them because their delusions were no longer bizarre.[3]

The *DSM* is designed to avoid the slippery spaces between disorders, the complaints not easily named or seen. Perhaps more than any other disorder, the psychosis risk syndrome puts pressure on the logic of the entire enterprise, as it forces doctors to break down the process of losing one's mind. They have to identify delusions before the patient really believes in them. When does a strong idea take on a pathological flavor? How does a metaphysical crisis morph into a medical one? At what point does our interpretation of the world become so fixed that it no longer matters "what almost everyone else believes"? Even William James admitted that he struggled to distinguish a schizophrenic break from a mystical experience.

For Anna, early symptoms were nearly impossible to describe, and the only way to communicate them was by making up new phrases: she wrote in her journal that she was struggling with "migrating electrical sensations" and the sense that "words were alive." The first therapist Anna went to see didn't know what to make of her disparate symptoms and, after a few sessions, told Anna she didn't know how to help her. Anna left without a referral. Two months later, she became a patient at the Psychosis Clinic, after finding it online. She was still getting A's in school, and there was no one symptom that bothered her most—it was only the sum total of these nameless experiences.

Anna's psychologist, Cherise Rosen, would not speak to me directly about Anna's treatment, but Anna said that she was initially told that her symptoms were mild and her prognosis good. Although she never received an official diagnosis, Anna tentatively concluded, after scouring psychiatric literature on psychosis and recognizing herself in the descriptions, that she was in the prodrome to schizophrenia. (The clinic accepts some prodromal patients but primarily works with people soon after a first psychotic break.)

Anna and I spoke several times over the past year, and she always approached her symptoms with critical distance. As an adolescent, she had vigorously argued that the fantastical stories her mother told were logically impossible: there was no global conspiracy, the phones weren't tapped, there was no need to put all their belongings on the sidewalk. Anna was terrified of becoming schizophrenic herself—more than 10 percent of people with a schizophrenic parent develop the disease, compared with about 1 percent in the rest of the population—but by the time she reached her early twenties, she was so socially and intellectually at ease that she assumed the window of risk had passed. "I defined myself in opposition to that backdrop of illogicality," she said.

Yet in the course of a few months, she had become too suggestible: she would come up with sweeping theories about the structure of reality—that time no longer existed, that the world was made entirely of gasses—and then, moments later, scold her-

*A Walk in the Park*, by Sebastiaan Bremer.
Courtesy the artist and BravinLee, New York City

[3] *Michel Cermolacce, Louis Sass, and Josef Parnas, writing in* Schizophrenia Bulletin, *offer a detailed account of the evolution and uses of this descriptor. Non-bizarre delusions are easier to pin down: according to the* DSM-IV *they include "situations that occur in real life, such as being followed, poisoned, infected, loved at a distance, deceived by spouse or lover, or having a disease."*

self for allowing the experience when there was "not a shred of scientific evidence." She kept waiting for the particles to vanish on their own. When they didn't, she worried she was "addicted to an idea." She felt that by wondering about the properties of matter—by blowing on books to see whether they would disintegrate—she had taken some irrevocable step toward illness.

Anna's doctors urged her to take antipsychotic medication, but Anna did so only sporadically, rarely at a therapeutic dose, primarily because the drugs made her feel too tired and mentally cloudy. During her weekly sessions, the psychiatrist at the clinic would check up on her with a stream of standard queries: Do you think your thoughts are not your own? Do you ever hear voices? For months, Anna said no, but she became increasingly uncertain. The boundary between fantasy and lived reality had become too porous. When she focused closely enough on her thoughts, she could make herself hear a soft voice behind them. More and more, her thoughts began to feel like "things," she said. They had their own location and sentience: she could feel them circling around her brain.

For the past two centuries, schizophrenia has been defined in part by its incomprehensibility. The psychiatrist Karl Jaspers wrote that schizophrenic symptoms embody "something inaccessible and foreign which, for this very reason, language defines as *deranged*." In the 1940s, doctors turned their own sense of alienation into a diagnostic marker. If they could not feel empathy for their patients, they would get a cold, vertiginous sensation known as the "praecox feeling" (schizophrenia used to be known as *dementia praecox*). Sigmund Freud apparently got this feeling and gave up on talk therapy with schizophrenics. "Ultimately I had to confess to myself," he wrote to a colleague, "that I do not care for these patients, that they annoy me, and that I find them alien to me and to everything human."

The pessimism surrounding schizophrenia is so deeply entrenched in psychiatric practice that when patients recover, they're occasionally told that they must have had a different disorder all along. People with schizophrenia take up 25 percent of the nation's hospital beds, and 10 percent of them eventually commit suicide. Over the past century, doctors have tended to grasp at anything resembling a cure, allowing little time to elapse between a new theory and its practical application. They injected patients with blood drawn from epileptics; put them into insulin-induced comas so that they might wake up renewed and transformed; and carved out parts of their prefrontal cortices—where unhealthy fixations were thought to reside—with ice picks.

Then, for decades, the prevailing treatment model called for no physical contact. Patients reclined on leather couches while psychiatrists plumbed their childhoods for hints of abuse or neglect, for mothers who had been too frigid or overprotective or needy. "We were just building castles, sand castles," Thomas McGlashan, the first American doctor to open a prodromal clinic, told me. He spent fifteen years as an analyst at Chestnut Lodge, a famous psychiatric asylum in Maryland, until he was overwhelmed by the sense that the disease had eluded him and his colleagues. "We can't just sit there and guess why someone has gone mad," he said. "We have to watch it happen."

McGlashan was inspired by the work of the New Zealand psychiatrist Ian Falloon, who, in the late 1980s, had attempted to treat all the people in two towns north of London who showed possible signs of impending psychosis. After giving these patients low doses of antipsychotics and home-based therapy for four years, Falloon reported that the two towns had one tenth as many new cases of psychosis as the rest of the country. More recent studies have shown that in the years before people have a psychotic break, they struggle to identify tastes and smells—a banana no longer tastes like a banana, or fresh water begins to carry the odor of mold—and they lose gray-matter volume in certain parts of their brains, particularly the hippocampus, which is crucial for learning and memory. (These findings are too rough to serve as a diagnostic tool.) In one study, McGlashan and other researchers had patients listen to recordings of several people speaking simultaneously so that their words were indecipherable. Those patients who could detect meaning—they heard the words "the children," "bombing," "the administration," "seem to have trouble," "practice dancing"—were more likely to become psychotic within one year.

McGlashan and his team at Yale are among those who have pushed for the psychosis risk syndrome (or, more recently, the "attenuated psychotic symptoms syndrome") to be included in the *DSM*, so that psychiatrists won't turn away patients simply because they haven't fulfilled diagnostic criteria. McGlashan has compared the historical importance of prodromal research to Freud's discovery that dreams reveal the unconscious. But many of his colleagues object to adding the diagnosis, since even the best clinics predict psychosis with less than 40 percent accuracy and there is no clearly established method for preventing conversion. It's impossible to know whether early intervention has prevented a psychotic break or whether the patient was never going to have one in the first place.

A few prodromal clinics prescribe antipsychotics to the majority of patients but most, including McGlashan's, treat patients for the symptoms they have, not the ones they may eventually develop.[4] Therapy, psychosocial education, and antianxiety and antidepressant medications are used. But if the diagnosis is administered by clinicians not specially trained in the field, the possibility of overmedication is much greater—a potential "public health

[4] *In one early experiment, McGlashan examined the efficacy of the antipsychotic drug olanzapine, but the study produced mixed results. It also prompted an investigation by the federal Office for Human Research Protections, in part because McGlashan had not adequately informed his patients that the drug has side effects: participants gained an average of twenty pounds.*

catastrophe," in the words of Allen Frances, chair of the *DSM-IV* Task Force. In a letter to the board of the American Psychiatric Association last year, he and Robert Spitzer, the architect of *DSM-III,* warned that if the psychosis risk syndrome were included in the manual, the association would run the risk of "medicalizing normality, and of trivializing the whole concept of psychiatric diagnosis."

Over the course of several months last winter, I visited the Center of Prevention & Evaluation (COPE), a prodromal outpatient clinic on the fourth floor of the New York State Psychiatric Institute in Manhattan's Washington Heights neighborhood. The clinic's director, Cheryl Corcoran, a compassionate, soft-spoken psychiatrist who has studied schizophrenia for her entire career, does not think the "risk" diagnosis is ready for unrestricted use, because of the difficulty of reliably identifying inchoate psychotic symptoms. Some patients can still hold down jobs, excel at school, or lead full social lives, yet they complain of transformations in their moods or perceptions. They often come to the six-year-old clinic (by referral or Internet search) because other doctors aren't sure how to classify what they are going through. In a paper in *Psychiatric Quarterly,* Corcoran published excerpts of interviews with patients' parents, many of whom relied on non-medical explanations to articulate what had changed: "I didn't know if he was possessed by the devil, because he was himself one day and then dramatically different and not coming back." "She is like a vessel that is never full." "It's hard because I don't even know this person." "It's not good to go against God—you can lose your soul."

I met with six patients individually in a small therapist's office overlooking the Hudson River and with photographs of serene scenery on the walls: Central Park in autumn, a dock overlooking the sea. They rarely used the word "schizophrenia," but they all spoke of the fear of losing their minds. "This whole thing has turned me into a philosopher," said Jorge, a peppy high school junior who was referred to the program two years ago after walking across the George Washington Bridge with a four-foot samurai sword wrapped in a blanket. He had become obsessed with black magic, spending hours a day on a website for occult researchers. At the time, he felt like he was on the brink of tapping into his own mystical powers. "I need to control myself when I study something," he told me, swiveling around in an office chair. "It sticks on me too hard. I get so dragged into the subject that I become it."

Like nearly all American prodromal clinics, COPE admits patients based on their responses to the Structured Interview for Psychosis-Risk Syndromes, a two-hour exam developed by McGlashan—modeled on a similar test authored by psychiatrists in Melbourne—that evaluates genetic risk, cognitive deterioration, social withdrawal, and the earliest flickers of psychosis.

> Do you daydream a lot or find yourself preoccupied with stories, fantasies, or ideas?
>
> Do you think others ever say that your interests are unusual or that you are eccentric?
>
> Do familiar people or surroundings ever seem strange? Confusing? Unreal? Not a part of the living world? Alien? Inhuman?
>
> Have you ever felt that you might not actually exist? Do you ever think that the world might not exist?

Another part of the exam assesses people's capacity for abstract thought. They are asked to interpret proverbs, such as "Don't count your chickens before they hatch," and to describe the similarities between an apple and a banana. The correct response—"Both are fruit"—eludes some of the sicker patients, who instead home in on concrete characteristics. The psychologist who administers the exam told me that one of the most common wrong answers is "Both have skin."

At the clinic, health is measured by degrees of conviction. Corcoran routinely checks up on her patients to see how compelling (on a scale of 1 to 10) they find their unusual beliefs. How do you think people are reading your mind? she asks gently.



HANDCRAFTED STORIES FROM THE HARPER'S MAGAZINE ARCHIVES

For 160 years, *Harper's Magazine* has published fiction and nonfiction by some of the world's most renowned authors. The Balvenie is pleased to bring to you a selection of these pieces from writers who have helped define world literature since 1850, including:

**Horatio Alger**
**Hans Christian Andersen**
**Lewis Carroll**
**Winston Churchill**
**Joseph Conrad**
**Stephen A. Douglas**
**A. Conan Doyle**
**George Eliot**
**Thomas Hardy**
**William Dean Howells**
**Henry James**
**Rudyard Kipling**
**Sinclair Lewis**
**Henry Cabot Lodge**
**Jack London**
**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**
**Herman Melville**
**Theodore Roosevelt**
**Arthur Symons**
**Mark Twain**

Please visit
**www.harpers.org/sponsor/thebalvenie/**

THE BALVENIE®
*Handcrafted to be enjoyed responsibly*

Are they reading it right now? Do you ever think it could be your imagination? As they flesh out their stories, people sometimes dismiss their fears as "crazy" or "goofy" or "absurd." Treatment becomes a process of reinterpreting and naming experiences that once felt too private and ineffable to share. "The man on the subway may know what I'm thinking" is translated as "I'm feeling paranoid." "When people are not entirely convinced, you can work with that insight," Corcoran said. "The experience doesn't have to impose a change on their identity."

Although people with schizophrenia are born with a biological vulnerability that predisposes them to the disease, the theory that psychosis arises from psychological turmoil is not as anachronistic as many have been led to believe. (As if to compensate for the psychoanalytic era, when a generation of parents were made to feel responsible for their children's suffering, psychiatrists have become squeamish about engaging with questions of cause and effect.) Studies have shown that people's chances of developing the disorder increase after demoralizing events—sexual or physical abuse, emotional neglect, witnessing a bombing or shooting, a mother's death. Other factors include poverty, growing up with more than three siblings, living in an urban area, and immigration. When people move to a neighborhood where they are the ethnic minority, their chances of becoming schizophrenic increase. As the anthropologist T. M. Luhrmann put it, "If your skin is dark, your risk for schizophrenia rises as your neighborhood whitens."

About a third of the patients at COPE immigrated to the United States. Chloe, a glamorous, well-dressed twenty-four-year-old Japanese American who worked as a writer's assistant, told me that many of her symptoms stemmed from "this constant questioning of what my true self is—even though that sounds really cheesy." She kept her black peacoat buttoned up to her chin for the length of our conversation. Each time she described a particularly troublesome symptom, she would laugh at herself, a soft, low, infectious giggle. "I think too much about every action I take. Like, 'I'm moving my hand right now! That's so magical!' " She wiggled her fingers in the air.

Chloe described her father as the "town nut" and then quickly apologized for saying it. As a child, she had struggled to understand that the stories he told about ghosts from the Civil War were no more real than the fairy tales she read before bed. When she went home to visit her family recently, she sat in the back yard with her father, who had refused treatment his whole life, and played house with figures he had made out of sticks. "I never want to be one of those people," she said softly.

At times, she imagined that the act of having a bad thought—and then thinking about that act—would cause blood to leak from her brain.



*Mirror,* by Sebastiaan Bremer. Courtesy the artist

The fear was new to her and, like Anna, she struggled to hold on to the experience. "Sometimes I'll just sit there and be like, 'Is there really anything wrong with me? What if I am making these things up because I'm so attention-starved?'" She managed a polite smile. "Or what if it's the fact that I'm making these things up that makes me mentally ill?" When I asked which experiences she may have invented, she put her chin in her palms and shook her head. "There are no words. It's like trying to explain what a bark sounds like to someone who's never heard of a dog."

Although the psychiatric literature describes a premorbid personality common to those who later develop schizophrenia—withdrawn, self-conscious, alienated—few of the patients I spoke with at COPE or at the Aware Program in Bangor, Maine, another prodromal clinic where I interviewed patients, fit that description. The only commonalities were that nearly all of them had moved through childhood and adolescence feeling more thoughtful, intelligent, or probing than their family and peers and that there had been an existential tinge to their preoccupations years before their symptoms emerged. Aaron, a patient at Aware who had been the president of his high school class, said that he and the others in his therapy group had "all gotten caught up on the deep, fundamental questions—religion, morality, ethics—and sucked in by them."

The raw material of delusions tends to evolve with the times, and over the past century, literature about psychosis reflects a steady thematic progression: delusions about communing with prophets and kings gave way to fears of being manipulated by the secret powers of factories, UFOs, radio DJs, fax machines, Al Qaeda, the Internet. Jessica Pollard, the director of the Aware Program, said that a few of her patients have become consumed by the fear that their private thoughts are being chronicled online. "I'll say, 'Okay, you really think there's a website about you? Well, then let's look for it,'" and they go on the Web together. (When patients can't find the site, Pollard says, they are usually able to accept that it doesn't exist.) Whether about all-knowing blogs or guiding angels, there's a uniformity to many delusions. They offer an explanation for an unfamiliar feeling: the experience of losing control over one's mind.

The terror of this loss was described most vividly to me by one of the oldest patients at COPE, a slim twenty-eight-year-old named Melanie, who wore khakis, penny loafers, and a turtleneck to our meeting. She seemed to have come closer to psychosis than any other patient I interviewed there, but she used a few shreds of logic to tether herself to reality. Her symptoms began in January 2009, shortly after US Airways Flight 1549 hit a flock of geese and landed in the Hudson River. As she watched the footage of passengers huddling on the wings of the floating aircraft, she recalled a status update she'd recently posted online that referred to the saying "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." "I felt a huge jolt," she told me, speaking rapidly. Her pale face flushed. "I've never been one to say I predicted anything, but—for one thing, birds. Birds had taken down the plane. And then bush—President Bush. I thought, 'Oh my God, this is another 9/11, and I predicted the whole thing.'"

Although raised Mormon, Melanie had been an atheist since college, and in the days after the crash she was dismayed to find the God of her childhood reentering her life. Every encounter seemed to have been orchestrated by Him. "When I heard a car honk out in the street, I remembered that there are supposed to be two trumpets announcing the Second Coming," she said, sitting upright at the edge of her chair. "The first trumpet calls for the good people, and the second trumpet is for everyone else. There was a part of me that wondered"—she lowered her voice to a whisper—"*'Is that one of the trumpets?'*" She felt like an "alien on this earth" and decided to check herself into the hospital, but the first cab she flagged down had an advertisement for the Broadway play *Wicked* on its roof. "I knew it might be crazy, but there was a part of me that felt that if I got into a cab that says 'Wicked,' it would take me to Hell. Because I'm wicked!"

Eventually she got into another cab. This one had an advertisement for Absolut Vodka. "I thought, 'Oh, Mormonism says you can't drink alcohol! But that's lesser. A smaller sin. All right, I'll get in the cab.'" As she drove to the hospital, she had a kind of double awareness: she felt crazed and terrified, and yet she also saw herself as crazed and terrified—a person she couldn't quite relate to. "I have a science background," she told me. "I was thinking, Why are you having these religious feelings? You are an atheist now. Richard Dawkins! *The God Delusion*! You're misinterpreting! There's something wrong with your brain!"

If Melanie had waited longer before she went to the hospital, if her symptoms had persisted for another few weeks (the religious thoughts lasted for about two days), she might have been diagnosed with schizophrenia. But she began taking a low dose of antipsychotics and almost immediately stopped worrying about Hell. A few days later, she went back to work and recently received a promotion. She's not sure whether the medication and therapy cures psychosis or just delays it forever, or whether the distinction even matters. In the past year, she has occasionally wondered whether people are tracking her, but she's usually able to ignore the fear. "I can catch it right at the beginning—before it becomes so intense that the only thought that matches up with those brain signals is: *It's the Apocalypse, your soul is suffering.*"

Melanie said that her grandfather, a former aerospace engineer, had a schizophrenic break while he was testing missiles for the government. When he began to have delusions that his coworkers were spying on him, the fantasy was close enough to his everyday life that it did not

strike him as obviously implausible. Melanie, on the other hand, was at a point in her life where the concept of a religious awakening was clearly out of context. "I was like, *Ha*!" she said. "My atheism saved me."

The course of psychosis is much more variable than the *DSM*'s definitions allow, and one of the dangers of including the risk syndrome in the manual is that this subtle state of mind is not easily expressed as a list of behavioral signs. Thomas McGlashan says psychiatric diagnosis is "just as completely primitive as it's always been," yet if he wants prodromal intervention to be widely practiced he will have no choice but to adhere to diagnostic standards. *The Psychosis-Risk Syndrome*, his new guidebook for clinicians, features a series of tables with a list of his patients' symptoms and a corresponding interpretation, but with no speculation as to what gave rise to a particular behavior or belief, the analysis is circular. The symptom is essentially the interpretation and the disorder itself. A critique in *Schizophrenia Bulletin* describes such methods as "akin to predicting extreme heat by an increase in temperature, without identifying the fire."

**Case:** Trinity presented at the interview in a lovely spring dress, wearing a straw hat that was completely lined with aluminum foil. She had plastic wrap around her hands and her shoes and large wads of cotton protruding from her ears.
**Interpretation:** Grossly strange appearance

**Case:** Mike reported that he thinks people think negatively about him and are plotting to make him confess everything that he has ever done wrong.
**Interpretation:** Concern about plots

**Case:** Dexter stated that he spends an increasing amount of time thinking about different ideas and is becoming preoccupied with these ideas. . . . He feels that it is important to write these ideas down and to encode them in a private codebook. He carried the codebook with him, showed it to the interviewer and translated the title to the interviewer as "The Book of Ideas."
**Interpretation:** Preoccupation with unusually valued ideas

**Case:** Larry reported that he was not his usual self, as if part of him was missing. He reported feeling disconnected from everything but found people's concern for him strange.
**Interpretation:** Missing self

What it means to have a self—and then to lose it—is central to any attempt to understand psychosis, but the *DSM* (and the reams of psychiatric literature it has spawned) do not encourage doctors to probe their patients' subjective experiences. The manual is so concerned with statistical reliability (the book was meant to show "psychiatry becoming more of a science," as one editor put it) that the brain is portrayed as a kind of black box: only behavioral output is charted. For a person who feels that her thoughts are implanted by the gods, or broadcast on the radio, or stolen by her own cat, the standard medical model—which treats symptoms as something external and discrete, independent of the self—fails to capture the core of the illness.

Psychiatrists hope that soon a neurological explanation will make terms like "self" and "reality" irrelevant for diagnosis, but in the absence of a cure, even the most nuanced neuroscientific theory can go only so far in explaining someone's altered sense of the world. Aaron, at Aware, struggled with the delusion that he was attracted to young children and would be persecuted for his desires. He said he was assured that these beliefs were "chemical" and "brain-based." "What happens if there's some truth to your delusion? What if it is tied to reality?" he said. "They don't want you to come up with mythical explanations. So they keep telling you over and over again: it's just your brain."

Thirty years ago, people with psychotic symptoms might have explained their problems by talking about the mixed messages they had received at home. "It's the way I was raised," or, "It's because my mother always rejected me." But these explanations have been replaced by a new narrative. When I asked patients at COPE and the Aware Program about the "cause" of their symptoms, many responded by referring to neurobiological processes: "The hippocampus is firing too much and telling me to be afraid." "It's the adrenaline, the epinephrine, and the norepinephrine; and the amygdala can either heighten the anxiety or diminish it, depending on which direction I take with my thoughts."

Anna, too, found herself scrutinizing the degree of agency she had over the inner workings of her brain. She enrolled in a neurobiology elective in school and tried to determine which pathological neural process was making her thoughts take on their own timbre. "It's the whole efference copy system," she told me. "I'm double-hearing, I think, and my thoughts are coming back to me as external." But the knowledge did little to ease the phenomenon, and sometimes, in the midst of writing a paper, she would become alarmed that she had ever imagined she could come up with an idea and wonder whether her thoughts were outside of her brain, floating. "The more I focus on my thoughts, the more it feels like they don't actually belong to me," she said. "It physically feels like my head is just completely hollow."

For Anna, there was no single moment of "conversion," no sudden break from one state of mind to the next. If there is a boundary between health and insanity, Anna felt herself creeping across it with pained self-awareness. She remembered as a teenager feeling dismayed by her mother's inability to communicate: her thoughts no longer conformed to the "laws that literally allow us to make sense." Now Anna worried that she, too, had somehow been unmoored from the rhythms of everyday life. Occasionally she could read dense academic texts, but other times she couldn't follow more than a few lines. She stopped going to class. Time no longer felt as if it passed: each moment had become disconnected from the next. She would lie in bed for hours, with the lights off,

watching the play of shadows on a wall that she wasn't sure existed.

An elegant and scrupulous writer, Anna was often dismayed to look back at earlier pages of her journal and see notes about futuristic mind experiments involving implanted memories and telepathy, or the physics of a new sphere of reality. In college, she had romanticized madness, but this was insanity as cliché. It offered no revelation. Knowing that these thoughts were just "symptoms"—a word that struck her as overburdened with consonants—didn't diminish their force. She struggled to create some theory that would explain why people seemed so phony and lifeless and small, as if they could be manipulated in her fingers. She considered many possibilities: they were marionettes, robots, drawings, automatons, agents of an omniscient godhead. Eventually, she settled on paper figurines. It was never a conclusion with which she was content, just the one that seemed to border on reasonable. She would walk down the streets talking to herself and didn't care that people were staring at her, because they were only made of paper.

A year after beginning treatment, she was briefly hospitalized after she came to the clinic incapable of uttering a word. She assumed that the hospital billed her insurance for treating schizophrenia, but she has never seen her formal diagnosis. "Schizophrenia" is a term that Dr. Rosen tends to avoid, since it implies (because of its history, and the way the *DSM* constructs the illness) a bleakly fixed outcome, which is often not the case.[5]

Anna went back and forth between feeling as if there was something inevitable about the cascade of symptoms and wondering whether the illness might not have progressed if she had gotten help even earlier, when the only trouble was a low yet constant hum of anxiety—a state of mind that, for most of us, is not abnormal. But her current condition now shades everything that came before. Since psychiatric diagnoses are based almost entirely on the patient's self-report—and Anna always felt that her descriptions were inadequate and distorting—she was left with the feeling that she'd somehow constructed the illness herself. By naming these experiences, she worried she had brought them into being.

Anna said she would have been a "lost soul" had she not found Dr. Rosen, who was the only person with whom she could openly share these experiences, but at times she struggled to maintain belief in the reality of her appointments. "Dr. Rosen will try to convince me, through Socratic reasoning, that the appointment is actually happening," Anna told me in March. She kept her thick, cordlike hair tucked behind her ears and wore a small, fitted V-neck sweater that narrowed her body. "She'll say, 'Anna, you are sitting on a chair, why aren't you falling through the chair?' And I'll have to admit, 'Yes, I am sitting on a chair, and I know the chair is solid because I am sitting on it.' She'll say, 'Well, are you talking to me right now?' And I'll say, 'Yes, I'm talking to you right now.'" She dug her fingers into her hair, cupping the back of her head with both hands. "But the thing is, it goes nowhere. She can reason with me like that, and it doesn't in any way change my mind. I'm perfectly aware that I can navigate space and move in time, and at the same time, none of it feels like it's happening. It just doesn't make a difference."

It wasn't as if she had surrendered to the world of particles; she found it dismaying and unbelievable, and yet she couldn't dismiss it as false. "There's a sense in which the law of contradiction—that something can't be X and not X at the same time—has ceased to matter," she said slowly. "What I know and what I believe no longer coincide, and I can't make them."

The last time I spoke with Anna, in June, more than two years after she first became a patient at the clinic, she said her delusions had become less compelling. Ordinary activities, like lounging on a bed and trusting that it wouldn't sink through the floorboards, no longer felt alien and unnatural. She said that her psychologist and psychiatrist strongly believed the change came from her taking a new antipsychotic drug, asenapine, for the past two months, but she couldn't convince herself of this explanation and was thinking of stopping the medication. It wasn't as if her perceptions had become normal again, she argued. Hard surfaces still felt airy and insubstantial, but now she made conscious decisions every day to rely on them just as she had before. It was a matter of ignoring swaths of her own perceptual experience, of relearning how to construct the world in her mind.

Along with a renewed interest in the mundane chores of living—eating, reading, exercising, cleaning dishes—she felt overcome by academic ambition for the first time in a year. She was preparing to apply to a new school, where she could start fresh, away from the people who had seen her at her most unhinged. She seemed both calmer and more energetic, and I wondered whether she felt as good as she had before her earliest symptoms emerged, before she ever began doubting the solidity of objects. That was impossible, she told me. The illness was about not just the active symptoms but also a more fundamental shift that made them plausible. "The symptom that bothers me the most is the one I can't even begin to describe," she said, leaning back on her white couch, the sun pouring into her living room.

After months spent struggling to articulate what she was going through, she felt her memories of the experience slipping away. "I can resort to bizarre metaphors, but I can't even in the grossest, roughest way communicate that state of mind." She paused, looking away. "The substance of my experience is thrown into doubt. I am left with this incredibly deep sense that none of these things ever happened to me." ■

[5] *Some psychiatrists now argue that the term "schizophrenia" shouldn't be used at all because it describes not a coherent entity but a collection of symptoms with widely varying outcomes. In Japan, the syndrome was renamed "integration disorder" in 2002; this led to twice as many patients being informed of their diagnosis.*

# A YEAR OF BIRDS

## At home on the North Platte River

*By Annie Proulx*

On my first day alone at Bird Cloud, my ranch near the Medicine Bow range in southern Wyoming, a bald eagle sat in a favorite perch tree across the river. It was December 30, 2006. The day before, two of them had sat side by side for hours, gazing down through the pale water sliding over the rocks, waiting for incautious fish. This was eagle-style fishing. Sometimes they stood in the shallows, cold water soaking their fancy leggings. Bald eagles are skillful at their trade, and I have seen them haul fish out of the freezing water onto the ice, or swoop down, sink their talons into a big trout, and rise up with the heavy fish twisting futilely. Bird Cloud's construction crew was lucky enough to see one of them dive onto a large fish, lock its talons, then struggle to get into the air with the heavy load, meanwhile riding the fish like a surfboard down the rushing river.

The house at Bird Cloud took two years to build. During that period I tried to identify the habits of the birds in the area and gradually recognized seasonal waves of avian inhabitants. Watching a large number of birds took concentration and time—there was nothing casual about it. The bald eagles were permanent residents. Some hawks stayed and some hawks went south. The great horned owls stayed. The ravens raised families every year and then went somewhere else for the summer to hunt once the young began flying. They came back in autumn to tidy up the nest and poke around, then departed again before the winter storms came. In early spring hundreds of red-winged blackbirds hit the copper-stemmed willows on the island and the cliff echoed their yodeling *aujourd'hui! aujourd'hui!* I put out feeders to attract the smaller birds, but days, weeks, and months went by with no visitors. These wild birds were too naive to recognize feeders as a source of food.

I was impressed that the bald eagles stuck around. The *Stokes Field Guide* stated: "Once a pair is established on a territory, they are very reluctant to move elsewhere to breed." That fit the case. Stokes also warned readers to stay at least a quarter of a mile away from the nest during the "egg-laying to early nesting" period, as alarmed parents might abandon their young.

*Annie Proulx's books include the novel* The Shipping News *and the story collection* Fine Just the Way It Is. *Her many honors include a Pulitzer Prize, a National Book Award, an Irish Times International Fiction Prize, and a PEN/Faulkner Award. She lives in Wyoming and New Mexico.*

Painting from the sketchbooks of Annie Proulx. Courtesy the artist and the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations

But these eagles hadn't read *Stokes* and tolerated all of us. The house itself was roughly a quarter of a mile from them and they warned us away only if we stood on the riverbank directly across from the nest or got over to the other side of the water and walked near their tree. The bald eagles have raised two chicks every year except one, when only a single chick survived. The books say one surviving chick is the norm, but these eagles have been calm and laid-back—wonderful parents with a high success rate. Whenever a stranger came to the house the bald eagles took turns flying over and scrutinizing them. Anything new—lawn chair, garden hose, shrubs—piqued their curiosity, and they flew over low and slow, examining the object. In fact, they were nosy. It was quite fair. I peered at them through binoculars, they peered back.

The North Platte River runs through the property, taking an east-west turn for a few miles in its course. Bird Cloud is 640 acres, a square mile of riparian shrubs and cottonwood, some wetland areas during June high water, sage flats, and a lot of weedy overgrazed pasture. On the lower portion, about 120 acres, Jack Creek, an important spawning site for trout, comes down from the Sierra Madre, thirty miles distant, and angles through the property to enter the North Platte. Jack Creek is big enough to need a bridge, and it has one, a sturdy structure made from the floor of a railroad freight car. Just below

Jack Creek there is a handsome little island, a shady cottonwood bosque, in the North Platte. The bulk of the property, more than 500 acres, lies at the top of a sandstone cliff, a sloping expanse of sedge and sage. The cliff is four hundred feet tall, the creamy cap rock a crust of ancient coral. This monolith has been tempered by thousands of years of polishing wind, blowtorch sun, flood and rattling hail, sluice of rain. After rain the cliff looks bruised, with dark splotches and vertical channels like old scars. Two miles west the cliff shrinks into ziggurat stairs of iron-colored stone. At the east end of the property the cliff shows a fault, a diagonal scar that a geologist friend says is likely related to the Rio Grande Rift, which is slowly tearing the North American continent apart.

On that first solitary day at Bird Cloud, I walked east to the Jack Creek bridge and looked up at a big empty nest high on the cliff across the river. It was clearly an eagle nest. Had the bald eagles used it before moving half a mile west to the cottonwoods? Had it belonged to another pair of eagles? The huge structure was heaped with snow. Somehow it had a fierce look, black and bristling with stick ends. At 4:30 the sun still plated the cliff with gold light. Ten minutes later it had faded to cardboard gray. I looked again at the distant big empty nest, then noticed that on the colluvium below and a little to the west of the nest there were two elk, likely refugees from a big herd that had moved through the property several weeks

"Bald Eagle," a photogram by Kate Breakey. Courtesy the artist. *Painted Light,* a monograph of Breakey's work, was published in October by the University of Texas Press. Breakey's work is on view through February 4, 2011, at The Wittliff Collections, Texas State University, San Marcos

earlier when hunting season opened. Twenty or thirty geese flew upriver high enough to be out of gun range. Dusk thickened, and then, in the gloaming, I saw a large bird fly into a cranny directly above the elk. Roosting time for someone, but who?

The next day—the last day of the year—the sun cleared the Medicine Bows at 7:45. It was a beautiful, clear winter morning, the sun sparkling on the snow, no wind, two degrees below zero, and a setting moon that was almost full. As Richard Lassels, a seventeenth-century guide for the Grand Tour, said of fireflies, "Huge pretty, methought." By noon both bald eagles were in the trees above the river, watching for fish below. After half an hour they flew upriver to try their luck in another stretch of water.

In mid-morning out of the corner of my eye I saw a large bird flying upriver with steady, brisk flaps, and remembered the one I had seen the previous evening taking shelter near the big, empty nest. Was it the same bird? What was it? It was too large to be a hawk.

New Year's Day was warm and sunny, thirty-two degrees, encouraging a few foolish blades of grass to emerge from the snow. A flock of goldeneyes, diving underwater to forage, dominated a part of the river that stayed open all winter. I thought there might be a hot spring there that kept it clear of ice.

At the end of the daylight the bald eagles sat in trees three hundred yards apart, merging into the dusk but still staring into the river. Their low-light vision must be good. At 4:40 a dozen Canada geese flew upstream. An orange ribbon lay on the western horizon. I waited, binoculars in hand. Two minutes later the last sunlight licked the top of the cliff, then was gone. The sky turned purple to display a moon high and full. I did not see the large mystery bird. Perhaps it was an owl and had no problem flying after dark. But I doubted it. I had a strong suspicion that it was an eagle, the owner of the big, sinister nest.

For me the keeping of a list of birds sighted has neither value nor interest. I am more interested in birds of particular places, how they behave over longer periods and how they use their chosen habitats. What the birds did, ate, and raised attracted me. I suppose I could say I was drawn to their stories. But in thinking about all this the next morning I once again missed seeing the big mystery bird. In the fleeting seconds it was in view I saw that its coloring was uniformly dark. The rhythm of its wingbeats was similar to that of an eagle. Could it be a juvenile bald eagle from last year's hatch? Or was it a golden? Maybe.

Days of flailing west wind, strong enough to push its snout under the crust of the fallen snow wherever the hares or I had left footprints, strong enough to then flip up big pancakes of crust and send them cartwheeling east until they disintegrated in puffs. Eagles love strong wind. It is impossible to miss the joy they take in exhibition flying. The bald pair were out playing in the gusts, mounting higher and higher until they were specks, then splitting apart. After a few minutes of empty sky the unknown big dark bird flapped briefly into view before disappearing in a snow squall.

Late in the afternoon, as dusk crept up the eastern rim of the world, one of the bald eagles showed up with talons full of branches and dropped out of sight at the nest tree. Were they redecorating the nest on a cold winter day? The wind swelled and blustered. A solitary duck appeared, blown all over the place. White underside and black head and wings and was that a round white spot on its face?—probably a goldeneye, but for a second it resembled a penguin shot out of a cannon. Half an hour later two more eastbound ducks appeared, clocking along with the wind at about eighty miles per hour. The second bald eagle came into sight fighting the headwind, just hanging in the air and flapping vainly, until finally it turned and in seconds was miles away. The nest eagle rose up and followed.

The next morning the wind had calmed to thirty miles an hour with gusts hitting fifty. It was a cold and sunny day, and the bald eagle team was out flying at 8:00. As I made coffee I saw the big mystery bird flapping out of

"Coyote," a photogram by Kate Breakey from the series Las Sombras. Courtesy the artist and Stephen L. Clark Gallery, Austin, Texas

sight toward the neighboring ranch. Why was it so elusive? I wanted badly to get a good look at it, but it seemed to fly past only when my head was turned. The two isolated elk stood on a knoll at the west end of the cliff; antlerless, dark-brown necks, yellow rumps, and red-brown body color. At first sight I could imagine they were the mountain sheep that used to live on the cliff in Indian times. Their faces seemed rather dished, like sheep faces. Magpies were busy across the river, and one raven sat in a tree slightly to the west of its nest site in the cliff. Could the raven, like the eagle, be interested in fixing up its nest so early in the year?

By afternoon the wind was up again, and at the top of the sky were three eagle-shaped specks. Three eagles playing in the wind. Three? Was one of them a juvenile bald planning to nest here, or was it the big mystery bird? And just how many eagles called this cliff home?

That night the wind went berserk, terrific shrieking and battering. In the morning it was still intense and I could see the windows moving slightly in and out. The worst wind yet. I went out into the driveway to see how badly it was drifted. Huge impassable drifts. The wind almost knocked me over. A small bird shot past the kitchen window, but on the far side of the river the two bald eagles sat calmly in the trees near their nest.

During the nights of high-velocity wind I lay tense and awake in the dark listening to the bellowing and roar. In the daytime it was easier to ignore. The television would not work because the wind had wrenched the satellite dish out of alignment. After four or five days of relentless howling the wind fell into a temporary coma, turning everything over to a warm, sunny, and calm day. Temperatures climbed into the forties. But the weather report warned that another storm was approaching. A friend in town smashed a narrow alley through the drifts on the county road and cleared out the driveway. I was no longer snowbound. The power company made it out and realigned the dish.

The daylight hours were lengthening by a few minutes each day. While it was calm I walked down to the east end of the property, and glancing up at the cliff I saw not one but two big dark birds. They were playing in the air, obviously delighted with the calm, with each other, with life in general. Then they both dove into their bedroom niche in the chimney west of the big, empty nest. I could not hear their voices, because a large flock of ducks, more than a hundred, flew over, twittering and whistling. The birds looked like eagles, they flew like eagles, but they were completely dark. They did not have the golden napes pictured in the bird books. Goldens soar with a slight dihedral; bald eagles soar with their wings almost flat. But I was now almost sure that a pair of golden eagles owned the big nest and were preparing to use it.

The next day started sunny but another three-day storm was on the way, and by late morning low, malignant clouds smothered the ranges in all directions. The weather people said it was going to turn very cold. I took advantage of the lull before the storm to get outdoors with the binoculars. A raven was fooling around the cliff face, trying out several niches. Then the big dark birds appeared above the cliff in a tumbling display. The binoculars showed that they did have lighter necks and heads. I had no doubt now. They were a pair of golden eagles and they were courting, planning to fix up the empty nest and raise a family only half a mile from the bald eagles. I felt fabulously wealthy with a bald eagle nest and a golden eagle nest both visible from my dining-room window. I wanted to spend the

"Great-horned Owl," a photograph by Kate Breakey from the series Las Sombras.
Courtesy the artist and Etherton Gallery, Tucson, Arizona

day watching them, but the storm was due to hit during the night so I headed out to get supplies while the road was still open.

January wore on. It was cold, and day after day the snow fell as in Conrad Aiken's story "Silent Snow, Secret Snow," which I read when I was eight years old, thinking it was a story about a profound snowfall. Later, when I learned it was an oblique study of intensifying juvenile madness, I was disappointed. On the frozen river four coyotes nosed around the north shore margins. Upstream the goldeneyes' strip of water was still open but shrinking daily.

On a Sunday morning of flat calm it was twenty-one degrees below zero. The air was stiff. Freezing mist had coated every tree and shrub. The river pinched in, making waists of black water in the ice. There were no birds in sight. The sun struggled up and the mist rose in great humps over the remaining ribbons of open water. The tops of the cottonwoods glittered like icy nosegays, stems wrapped in gauze. Spring seemed very far away, but the bald eagle pair sat side by side catching the first rays. They often sat this way, one great eagle-beast with two heads. As the sun gained height the eagles fluffed themselves out and began to preen. A lone magpie flew over the mist. In the afternoon I skied down to the east end and into the cottonwood bosque. A golden eagle and four magpies were eating the scanty remains of a snowshoe hare. The eagle fled as I came in sight, and the magpies followed reluctantly, sure I was after their feast. It was easy to see what had happened. The hare's tracks zigged and zagged through the brush, but one foot east of the corpse I saw the snow-angel wing prints of the attacking eagle.

Wyoming was once a haven for eagle killers. In the bad old days of the 1960s and 1970s in this valley many men who are now cattle ranchers raised sheep and firmly believed that bald and golden eagles carried off young lambs. If you raised sheep you killed eagles—bald or golden, but especially goldens, though both birds were protected by law—by poison (thallium sulfate was popular), or by shotgun from rented helicopters and small planes, or by rifle from an open pickup window. Eagles were killed in other states, especially in the West, but Wyoming became notorious to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to the Audubon Society, and to newspaper readers across the country as the home ground of the most ignorant and vicious eagle-killing ranchers. Chief among them was the wealthy and powerful sheep rancher Herman Werner, ex-president of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association. He and his son-in-law were called "the Wyoming helicopter monsters" after they used a hired helicopter to "sluice" eagles.

Nathaniel P. Reed, an assistant secretary of the interior under Richard Nixon, made stopping the killings a primary goal. In 1971 the FBI set up a sting. An agent who had been raised in the West posed as a ranch hand and got a job on Werner's spread, where, in the bunk house, he heard about dozens of dead eagles. Because this was hearsay, a federal judge would not issue a search warrant. But two Audubon Society members who had been monitoring the eagle killings were out at the airfield one day and happened to notice someone working on a nearby helicopter. They could see a shotgun and empty shells in the craft. They had a camera with them and they used it. The man working on the helicopter realized he had been photographed. Weeks later the anxiety-ridden helicopter pilot showed up at the Department of the Interior in Washington. He said that if he were granted immunity he'd tell about the eagle killings, and so he did, telling a Senate subcommittee that he had carried eagle-hunting shooters into the Wyoming skies, that Werner was one of the air service's best customers, and that the gunners had shot more than five hundred bald and golden eagles. *Time* reported that the Wyoming dead-eagle count was seven hundred seventy birds. Despite "national outrage" the department was still not able to get a search warrant for Werner's land. But the U.S. Air Force flew a surveillance plane over the ranch, and an infrared camera picked up a pile of decomposing flesh. That finally got the search warrant and led to the discovery of a great number of eagle carcasses. As Dennis Drabelle reported in *Audubon* magazine,

> There was still a hitch. The U.S. attorney for Wyoming balked at bringing a case against the rancher because he was sure that Herman Werner would never be convicted by a Wyoming jury. Werner … made a surprise visit to [Nathaniel] Reed's office. "He simply bolted in," Reed remembers, "a wiry man wearing a Stetson hat. He said he was going to get me. I said quietly, 'Before you get me, please tell me who you are.' He said, 'I am Herman Werner, the man who protects his sheep by killing eagles. And you don't know anything about eagles.'"

The tough alternative newspaper *High Country News* took up the cause and public opinion began to quiver and shift. The U.S. attorney general pressed for prosecution. But Werner never came to trial. A few months before the court date, he was killed in a car wreck. In Wyoming, as the wool market declined and sheep men turned to cattle, as the fine for killing eagles greatly increased, as ranchers began to learn that the Department of the Interior had sharp teeth and that bald eagles were interested in carrion and fish, not lambs, the killings mostly stopped.

A very Wyoming touch to the whole affair is in the Werner Wildlife Museum at Casper College. The museum includes "an extensive bird collection."

Finally, after weeks of swinging in the wind, the bird feeder attracted a clientele—around fifty gray-crowned rosy finches. Rosies started coming in from everywhere. Chris Fisher in *Birds of the Rocky Mountains* put it well: "During the winter, Gray-crowned Rosy Finches spill out of the attics of the Rockies to flock together at lower elevations." So they were likely coming into this valley from both the Sierra Madre and the Medicine Bows. They rose into the sky for no reason I could ascertain, paused, and then returned to the feeder. There were no birds of prey in sight, no humans, no dogs or cows or snares, the wind was calm and the

day sunny. Did they all fly up to spy out the land for distant threats? Or to reassert a (to me, invisible) hierarchy? Sometimes they flew to the trees near the river for a few minutes, then back to the feeder. I had to refill the thing several times a day.

The beautiful days had grown longer. One morning I watched one of the bald eagles dive toward an open stretch of water off the island, and I ran madly upstairs with the binoculars just in time to see it heave a fish onto the ice. It ate part of the fish and then flew to the nest. At ten past five the sun still gilded the top fifty feet of the cliff. One bald eagle was in the nest tree, the other flying downriver. The cliff turned the color of a russet apple, and I enjoyed the rare deep-orange sunset smoldering under the edge of a dark dirty-sock cloud.

I bought a telescope and set it up in my bedroom, which has a grand view of the river and the cliff. The eagles weren't in sight but one of the elk was. Oddly, it seemed to be wearing a canvas jacket, different and lighter in color than its neck and haunches. Was it a trick of the light? It looked like a boulder in the middle. After an hour the elk stood up and disclosed the second elk lying close behind it. With the telescope, details leaped into prominence. The first elk pulled some tufts of hair from its back, then nibbled on sage or rabbit brush. The second elk became invisible again. There looked to be well over a hundred rosy finches at the feeder. I tried to walk along the river but the golden eagles became so agitated that I turned back. One golden angrily escorted me all the way to the house. I had once thought of inviting bird-watchers onto the property but I knew then that was impossible. The goldens had to have privacy.

A few days later I went for an evening walk on the old property-line road, keeping a quarter-mile distance between myself and the goldens. They came out but did not call, just flew along the cliff, watching me. Near the end of the property another pair of goldens appeared, silent and flying rather low as though also checking me out. Suddenly the nest pair came roaring east along the cliff and drove the strange pair away. I could see the new goldens settling in a tree to the east. Perhaps they were nesting there. Six eagles in three pairs in the space of a mile.

The next morning one of the bald eagles and a prairie falcon had a sky-filling quarrel, the falcon darting, the eagle swooping. The falcon disappeared suddenly. At noon the wind began to rise and in an hour it was lashing the cottonwoods. One of the bald eagles sat on a branch above the river watching for fish. The branch moved vigorously to and fro. With each lurch the eagle braced its tail against the branch like a woodpecker, and for some reason I found this endearing. Sometimes I thought of these birds as Evan Connell's Mr. and Mrs. Bridge. The falcon flew around near the goldens' part of the cliff. The big birds were not in sight. Something about the falcon's busybody day bothered me. Was it looking for a nest site? In previous years they had nested at the far eastern end of the cliff near another pair of prairie falcons. Every bird the falcon came near seemed agitated.

Chickadees were rare at Bird Cloud. At my first Wyoming home, in Centennial, dozens of mountain chickadees came to the feeder on the lee side of the house every day, but I almost never saw them at Bird Cloud. Of course, Centennial was close to the forest and Bird Cloud was surrounded by open grazing land. The prevailing weather at Bird Cloud had, as its basic ingredient, a "whistling mane" of wind from the northwest. It built concrete snowdrifts in winter. In summer it desiccated plants, hurled sand and gravel, and dried clothes in ten minutes. The eagles, falcons, and pelicans loved windy days and threw themselves into the sky, catching updrafts that took them to mad, tilting heights. Why was it so windy at Bird Cloud? With the top of the cliff checking in at a little more than seven thousand feet above sea level the wind was almost never flat calm, and often like a collapsing mountain of air. The cliff directed the wind along its stony plane face as boaters coming down the river knew only too well. And because vast tracts of land to the west were heavily grazed cow pastures unbroken by trees or shrubs, the wind could rush east unimpeded. And this, I found, rereading Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac,* was deadly for chickadees.

> I know several wind-swept woodlots that are chickless all winter, but are freely used at all other seasons. They are wind-swept because cows have browsed out the undergrowth. To the steam-heated banker who mortgages the farmer who needs more cows who need more pasture, wind is a minor nuisance.… To the chickadee, winter wind is the boundary of the habitable world.

He adds "books on nature seldom mention wind; they are written behind stoves."

Fresh snow fell overnight and the rosy finches were fighting over the woodpecker picnic mix as rich suet held the seeds together. I wondered if something was dead at the top of the cliff. The goldens were up there, rising and falling, and the balds were there as well. I remembered several years earlier in Centennial when a deer got into our small herb garden, got panicked by something, tried to squeeze through a six-inch space between fence slats and got its broad chest wedged in, and was unable to escape. Whatever had frightened it tore out its heart, leaving the body still jammed in the fence. We dragged the carcass down into the willows. A pair of goldens found it within hours and in three days had eaten the entire deer. Now I hoped that whatever attracted the eagles was not one of the elk. I had not seen either for about a week. A little later one of the balds was back in its fishing tree and half a dozen whistler ducks flew over the house with one of the goldens right above them, maybe trying for a feathered jackpot.

As March came in the river deepened and widened. I could hear the water gurgling under the ice from the house. As I knew they would, red-winged blackbirds took over the bird feeder. Their main meeting place was the willow thicket on the west end of the island where hundreds jammed into the same clump of trees, sang and

Shop davidmorgan.com

#KBN-65 $95

#N22068E $66

#N967 $94

#H195 $88

Add $8 handling per order
Satisfaction guaranteed

*Shop online or request a catalog*

Akubra® Hats from Australia
Northwest Jewelry Designs
Filson® Clothing and Luggage

David Morgan
800-324-4934 davidmorgan.com
11812 N Creek Pkwy N, Ste 103•Bothell, WA 98011

sang, flashed their epaulets, then all flew away only to return and sing and flash again. The prairie falcon cruised back and forth in front of the cliff, its color so like that of the pale rock it was virtually invisible. A marmot showed up from somewhere—a leftover pile of lumber—and took up a station beneath the bird feeder, happy with the seed that the redwings dropped. Walking down at the east end of the property in a light rain I saw a large marmot on the top of the cliff, peering down. A few hundred yards east I caught a glimpse of a large coyote as it ducked out of view. Both were oversized. With hindsight I later thought the marmot was really a mountain-lion cub and the large coyote probably its mother, as I saw both cats at close range later in the spring.

One lovely warm afternoon the goldens were sunning themselves on the cliff top above their nest site. They flew outward, wheeled, and returned to a projecting rock they favored. When they flew, their shadows also flew along the cliff and it was not easy to sort out the birds from their shadows. The larger golden sat on the rock while the smaller, darker eagle did some fancy wingwork, glided down to his lover, presented her with something to eat, then mounted her. I had never seen a pair of eagles mate before.

Every day Bird Cloud showed remarkable changes. The dull mud was inescapable. A few pale green rushes sprouted at the end of the island. The river grew larger and faster. One of the elk reappeared after a two-week absence. It, or they, may have been feeding on the back slope, which could not be seen from the house. In mid-month a little burst of warm days cleared most of the ice out of the river. Falcons, ducks, geese, hawks, and eagles sped in all directions, coming and going. I counted twenty mountain bluebirds and knew there was a housing shortage. But the ravens, harassed mercilessly by the prairie falcons, abandoned their old nest site. I was left with only the memory of the previous year when four young ravens teetered, flapped, and finally pushed off from the home nest late one afternoon to try their wings. It had been Memorial Day weekend and one of the season's first thunderstorms was moving in. The young ravens fluttered and hopped, clung and dropped, flew short distances, always close to the cliff face with its thousand crannies. We watched them with pleasure, but their hopping and unpracticed flying also attracted the attention of every other bird in the vicinity. The bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, and falcons circled or chose high perches suitable for diving attacks. The great horned owls hooted from the island. The storm arrived, dropping first a few splattering drops, then sheets of cold rain that drowned our campfire. I was sure the young ravens were done for. They could not seem to get back to the nest ledge and huddled on narrow shelves or exposed knobs of rock. With sadness we went inside, dreading what the morning would bring. Would any of them survive the waiting predators? Would the storm batter them?

The dawn showed off one of those fragrant, polished days so rare in Wyoming, windless and fresh-washed. We all rushed to the cliff with binoculars wondering whether any of the young birds had survived. "I see one!" someone called and then another came into the sunlight from its hiding hole, rather damp and bedraggled. The last two joined them from some cranny, and there they all were, preening in the sun, smart and sassy and very much alive. They spent the day practicing evasive flying and I didn't worry about them any longer.

An early-morning walk on the island brought me face to face with a great horned owl in a willow thicket. So strange. The left eye was brilliant yellow, the right one a rusty brown, very likely from an injury. It fled into a cottonwood and stayed there all day. Now migrating birds flew over constantly, following the river. One afternoon there were six golden eagles on their way somewhere else but unable to resist playing in the air currents above the cliff. Mallards, mergansers, and dippers arrived, then black scoters, a pair of northern flickers, a northern harrier, and a single western

meadowlark. The river, fed by rapid snow melt, continued to rise, and on March 19 it was high enough to lift the bridge and swing it onto the island shore, cutting it off from the mainland. The warm days continued, worrisome because everything was drought dry. A forecast for rain brought nothing. When it finally did fall it made the roads into an icy, slippery mush.

One of the Canada geese, no doubt thinking itself clever, built a nest high up on the east end of the cliff, not far from a peregrine falcon nest. I wondered if this was the same foolish goose that had built a nest the year before in the top of a tall tree and open to the sky between the golden eagle nest and the prairie falcons. She and her mate lost all their chicks to predators and had to try again, this time with a nest on the ground beneath the tree and the male standing guard.

In late March a winter storm moved in for a day and a night. Despite the snow and wind a flock of horned larks gleaned seed among the sage and rabbit brush. The prairie falcon roared down out of nowhere and the larks exploded into fleeing rockets. Other carnivorous birds, especially the bluebirds, sat dejectedly on the fences waiting for spring. When the storm sailed away it left a foot of fresh snow. At the cold sunrise there was a heavy fog over the river that expanded and blotted out the sun. Beneath the snow the ground was wet, half-frozen mud. Just to have somewhere to walk I drove the truck back and forth in the driveway, flattening the snow. The snow turned the black metal ravens on the gateposts into magpies.

April came in windy and warm. On a walk to the east end I found a dead osprey on the ground, its gray feet curled in an empty grasp. There was no way to tell what had brought it to its death. There were so many jealous and territorial birds around that any one of them might have seen the osprey as an interloper—within half a mile two pairs of goldens, red-tailed hawks, and a pair of peregrine falcons, and a little farther west the raven family and the prairie falcons. Spring is the time for death. A calf carcass washed up on the island to the delight of the magpies and perhaps the eagles.

I was not sure of the timing of the bald eagles' family life. They had started fixing up their huge nest in December, a task that can go on for several months. It looked to be more than six feet across. But I suspected there were young in the nest the first week in April, mostly because I saw one of the bald eagles determinedly chasing a red-tailed hawk near the nest. The hawk had been patrolling the western section of cliff for several days. That would put the eagles' egg-laying in the last week of February or the first week of March. The female lays two or three eggs over a period of about a week. Both eagles take turns brooding the eggs. Though the females do more of this duty than the males, both have a brood patch on their bellies: bare, hot skin that rests directly on the eggs. Whoever is not on the eggs rustles food. On a warm, sunny day both parents can have a little break. Incubation takes thirty-five days, more or less. Once the eaglets have hatched, exhausting work begins. If the weather is still cold one of the parents stays with the babies and keeps them warm. When the spring sun beats down hot and fierce the parent eagles transform themselves into wide-wing umbrella shades. In the early days the male was kept busy finding and bringing food to the nest, four to eight times a day. After the first few weeks the female hunted as well, and in the late stages of rearing a nestling the mother did most of the hunting.

By the third week in April the American pelicans had arrived, big knobs on their beaks showing it was breeding time in their world. The pelicans were fabulous fliers and on windy days put on astonishing exhibitions of soaring and diving. Fishermen in Wyoming shoot pelicans because they believe the birds eat all the fish, leaving nothing for them. That first spring at Bird Cloud I was appalled by all the big, fluffy white carcasses that floated down the river.

In May the weeds came and I spent hours pulling evil hoary cress and trying to claw out the prolific white roots. The air was stitched



DOMI MINA
NVS- TIO-
ILLV MEA

Unwrap the History of the English Language With the **NEW**

OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY ONLINE

**www.oed.com**

*The Definitive Record of the English Language*

In print or online, the OED reveals the history of the English language like no other resource.

"The greatest work in dictionary making ever undertaken."
***—New York Times***

For a limited time, personal online subscriptions are available at a special gift rate, go to
**www.oup.com/us/giveoed**

with hundreds and hundreds of swallows. Several persistent rough-winged swallows tried to build nests in the house eaves. To reduce the number of possible spots for porcupine dens I started piling up dead wood and fallen branches on the island, planning to have a bonfire on a rainy day. There was plenty of undisturbed room for them on the other side of the river. A tiny, dark house wren had found the wren-sized birdhouse on the island and was moving in, carrying wisps of dead grass and minuscule twigs not much larger than toothpicks.

It was a big thrill when I saw a white-faced ibis near the front gate where there was irrigation overflow. The ibis stayed around for weeks. A few days after this sighting I was sitting near the river and saw two herons fly to the bald eagles' fishing tree. They were too small to be great blue herons and did not really look like little blues. A few minutes with the heron book cleared up the mystery; they were tricolor herons, the first I had ever seen. By the end of the month American canaries were shooting around like tossed gold pieces despite another cold spell.

Suddenly it was mid-June and noxious weeds grew everywhere—leafy spurge, cheatgrass, Canada thistle, and more hoary cress. Nests were full of young birds, and the predator birds, who had hatched their young earlier, had rich pickings. Even a raiding great blue heron flew over pursued by smaller birds. I hadn't dared go near the fence across from the big nest for fear of forcing the goldens to abandon, but I could see now that they had two big chicks in the nest. And June marked the appearance of an insect I had never seen before—*Eremobates pallipes,* a.k.a. wind scorpion, a resident of deserts and the Great Basin. It is straw-colored, about three quarters of an inch long, and very much resembles a scorpion although it is not poisonous. It will bite if disturbed. It feeds on smaller insects, so I caught it and put it outside, hoping it could catch mosquitoes. More likely it made a snack for the myriad hungry birds rushing around outside.

On a hot, dusty Fourth of July, I walked down the road to the east end, pleased not to be cursed by the parent goldens. One of their chicks had found a narrow shelf with an overhanging ceiling not far from the nest, and there it sat, harassed by—who else?—the prairie falcon. But even young goldens are tough, and the falcon departed. When I got back from my walk I found some bird had dropped the corpse of a large nestling on the deck, white downy feathers, wings not fully fledged, the head gone. I thought it might have been the chick of a great blue heron or sandhill crane. The drought was bad, very hot and dry day after day and no rain for a long time. The grass cracked and broke when stepped on and it was too hot to sleep at night. Wind-scorpion weather.

A hard, hot wind blew incessantly, drying out the lettuces in the garden, tearing petals off any flowers not made of steel. But the young eagles, both bald and golden, loved this hot wind. They and their parents were all soaring and zooming, trick flying, mounting high and then rolling down the air currents. At one point I could see seven eagles flying above the cliff at various altitudes, some so high they resembled broken paperclips.

A few mornings later a bird with an ineffably beautiful song woke me. I had no idea what it was and it was not visible from the high bedroom windows. I tried to identify it from birdsong CDs without success. It was the harbinger of a nasty little frost, a complete surprise that killed the tops of my tomato plants and beans, scorched the zucchini and cucumbers. I didn't realize it but the surprise mid-August frost would be an annual event at Bird Cloud, striking just when the garden was approaching high ripeness.

On the first of September, making coffee in the kitchen, I glanced up at the cliff and saw the big tawny-red mountain lion walking along the top. It descended to an area of outcrop above and to the right of two huge square stones balanced almost on the edge. Three weeks later, just before dark, I glassed the cliff and the colluvia below and noticed a large round rock on the debris pile that I couldn't remember having seen before. The telescope revealed it as a dead deer that had apparently fallen from the top of the cliff. Falling off a cliff was not something even the most addlepated deer would do. I surmised the lion had chased the panicked deer over the edge, and until dark I kept peering through the telescope, looking for the lion come to claim its kill. But the lion did not come. The next morning two ravens were on the carcass. As I made coffee I noticed that the ravens were gone, replaced by thirty magpies and two coyotes. It took the coyotes half an hour to break through the hide. The bald eagles perched nearby, waiting for their chance, and several ravens also waited. One of the coyotes departed. There was no sign of the lion. By mid-morning the remaining coyote, bloody-muzzled and gorged, waddled away. The magpies moved in. The most cautious diners were the eagles and ravens, who waited until after eleven for a turn at the deer. The first coyote returned with two friends and all three began to tug the carcass toward the edge of the colluvium, a drop-off of about ten feet. By afternoon the carcass was no longer in sight, now fallen into the brush below where perhaps the lion would claim it. The renegade thought occurred to me that perhaps the neighbor's cow that had fallen off the cliff the year before had been chased to its death by the lion.

The prairie falcons left, and the next week the ravens were back. A lesser goldfinch flew into a window. I left it on the deck and in the morning it was gone—I hope because it revived. Many birds knock themselves out and then come back from apparent death rather groggy and confused, but alive. The big, handsome northern flicker is an aggressive bird that often hurls itself at its reflection, falls like a stone, lies on its back with its feet curled up for a while, opens one eye, gets shakily up, and staggers through the air to a nearby branch,

where it spends an hour or two thinking black thoughts—and then flies into the window again.

By the end of the month most of the migratory birds were gone. I remembered an earlier September when some friends and I had camped at the top of Green Mountain where we could look down at the Red Desert and make out the old stagecoach road and a few bunches of wild horses. We hiked around, noticed quite a few hawks, and by mid-morning realized that the hawk migration was in full spate. Hundreds of hawks flew over us that day, swiftly, seriously intent on getting away. Also intent, not on getting away but on filling up great pantries with pine seeds, were gray jays. They would cram seed after seed into their pouches and then take them to their secret caches. One smart gray jay, trying to pack in more than his crop could hold, hopped (heavily) to a little pool of water in the top of a boulder, took a few sips to wet down the seeds, and resumed gathering.

By mid-October most of the birds had gone south. The meadowlarks were the last to leave. The golden eagles were somewhere else, though probably in the area. The bald eagles were involved in a major undertaking—the building of a new nest in a cottonwood closer to the river and closer to our house. One eagle flew in with a double-talon bunch of cut hay, likely swiped from a cattle ranch's bales. This new nest, unlike the old one, was highly visible. I worried about people who floated the river in summer. Of course, this eagle pair had shown that they were more interested in river traffic and what we are doing around the house than in privacy and isolation. As with humans, in the bird world it takes all kinds. For weeks they hauled materials in, mostly sticks and a dangerous length of orange binder twine that could tangle young birds tramping around in the nest. They took breaks from the construction and went fishing at the east end of the cliff, something they would not do when the goldens were in residence. But were the goldens really gone? There were a few days of rain and wet snow that made the county road a slithery mass of greasy mud.

On the first of November I walked along the river fence line in the evening, and as I came abreast of the big nest, the scolding "GET AWAY, FOOL!" call came from the cliff. The goldens were in their bedroom niche.

Colder and colder the days, clear and windless, the kind of days I have loved since my New England childhood. A rough-legged hawk, a stranger in these parts, came hunting over the fields. The bald eagles did something unusual—they chased it furiously, asserting their territorial rights. The hawk fled. The new nest looked large and commodious. The day after Thanksgiving a Clark's nutcracker appeared briefly. It looked a little like a gray jay but had dark markings on its face like a small black mask, and the body and wings were utterly Clark's. I saw it for only a few seconds before it sprang away, but it seemed that very often I saw birds that were subtly at variance with Sibley's illustrations.

Near the end of the month a little warm wind pushed in a bank of cloud. A northern harrier coursed over the bull pasture, just barely skimming the grass, floating on and on in lowest gear, then landing in the distance, hidden from me. It rose again, higher, using the wind. One morning one of the bald eagles brought a hefty stick to the new nest. It was long and awkward, and to get it in place the bird had to circle behind the nest and trample it in from the back with the help of its mate. It was a really big nest. A few hours later a bold raven came and sat on the west branch of the bald eagle's fishing tree, about twenty feet away from the male eagle. They both seemed uneasy. The raven pretended unconcern and stretched his wings. The eagle shifted from one foot to another as if muttering, "What is this clown doing in my tree?" The big female eagle came in for a landing and sat beside her mate, and as she put down her landing gear the raven took off.

In the afternoon the wind strengthened after four days of calm and the goldens enjoyed it, rising into the empyrean until they seemed to dissolve in blue. It was like one of the *Arabian Nights* tales in reverse, the tale in which someone fleeing looked back and saw something the size of a grain of sand pursuing, and a little later looked again and saw something the size of a lentil. Later still the pursuer resembled a beetle, then a rabbit, and finally a slavering, demonic form on a maddened camel. But to my eyes the goldens shrank first to robins, then to wrens, then hummingbirds, and finally gnats or motes of dust high in the tremulous ether. Just before gray twilight the northern harrier returned but strayed into enemy airspace above the cliff, and suddenly there were four ravens chasing and nipping. The extra pair of ravens came from nowhere, like black origami conjured from expert fingers. As darkness swelled up from the east a full moon rose and illuminated great sheets of thin cloud like wadded fabric drawn across its pock-marked white face.

November fell through the floor and December began with the tingling, fresh scent of snow. Seven or eight inches fell. I had hoped this month would be snow-free, but that hope was dashed. Getting the mail or supplies was chancy. Usually I could put the old Land Cruiser in low and smash through the snow, but in places the wind had packed the snow into unsmashable drifts and I got well and truly stuck on the county road. I tried to barrel through a five-foot drift that looked fluffy, small in comparison with the big piles that would come later in the winter, and ended up high-centered on a solid pedestal of snow, all four wheels off the ground. It snowed again just before Christmas, deep and beautiful snow that lay quiet in a rare calm. The hero sun came out for a quarter hour, then fell as though wounded. Eagles and goldeneyes were the only birds around. At dusk I skied down to the Jack Creek bridge. Mist rose from the river and the cliff seemed to be melting, the top floating on quivering froth.

I made it down to the last days of December. It was fifteen below zero and the snow squealed when I walked on it. Late in the morning I saw the pair of golden eagles flying high over the cliff, playing in the frigid air. It began snowing again and I decided I would try to get out the next day. The lane was half-choked with snow. If I didn't go the next day I knew I could be isolated for a long time, jailed at the end of the impassable road. I packed the old Land Cruiser and fled to New Mexico. ■

# FIT TO PAINT

*by Fred Tomaselli*

"All the News That's Fit to Print"
The New York Times
Late Edi
Today, cloudy with
cooler, high 49. Tonig
wind, low 43. Tom
wind, heavy rain, thr
high 49. Weather m
VOL. CLIX . . No. 54,977
© 2010 The New York Times
NEW YORK, FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 2010
Cuomo Hands Paterson Cases To an Ex-Judge
A Surprise Step After Political Pressure
By DANNY HAKIM
ALBANY — Facing growing political pressure, Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo on Thursday appointed an independent counsel to take over his office's investigation into the Paterson administration's response to a domestic violence case.
Mr. Cuomo said Judith S. Kaye, the former chief judge of New York, would lead the inquiry, along with an investigation into whether the governor lied when he was questioned by the State Commission on Public Integrity about his office's solicitation of Yankees World Series tickets.
The development came as a surprise; Mr. Cuomo had previously expressed no public reservations about taking on the sensitive cases, even as he prepared to announce his candidacy for governor, and his staff had spent the past two weeks investigating the domestic violence case.
But in recent days, the political complications for Mr. Cuomo became more apparent. The cases are likely to drag on for weeks if not months, potentially colliding
DEAL IS REA
ON HEALTH
OF 9/11 W
RESCUE AND
Up to $657 M
Problems At
to Ground
By MIREYA NA
A settlement of
million has been re
cases of thousands
cleanup workers at
who sued the city ov
their health, accord
ficials and lawyers
tiffs.
They said that th
would compensate
plaintiffs according
ity of their illnesses
of their exposure
nants at the World
site.
Lawyers from bo
on Thursday to disc
of the settlement w
vin K. Hellerstein
States District Co
Southern District of
Payouts to the pl
come out of a feder
insurance company
about $1.1 billion tha
MARTIN MEJIA/ASSOCIATED PRESS
For Chile, More Aftershocks, and an Inauguration
Presidents Fernando Lugo of Paraguay, left, and Rafael Correa of Ecuador, guests at the inauguration of Chile's new president, reacted to an aftershock felt Thursday in Valparaíso, Chile, the strongest since the devastating Feb. 27 earthquake. Page A8.

*Mar. 12, 2010*, gouache on printed watercolor paper

*Fred Tomaselli is an artist based in New York City. An exhibition of his work is currently on view at the Brooklyn Museum.*

All artwork © the artist and courtesy James Cohan Gallery, New York City/Shanghai

e News
it to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition
Today, warmer, becoming partly sunny, high 85. Tonight, increasing clouds, thundershower, low 71. Tomorrow, spotty thunderstorms, high 90. Weather map, Page B16.

.. No. 54,717 © 2009 The New York Times NEW YORK, THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2009 $2.00

PPING UP
TO QUELL
N PROTEST

ND BEATINGS

ay Power Is
rom Clergy
Military

ILA FATHI
EL SLACKMAN

Iranian officials orts to crush the itance to a disput- al election on security forces a small group of brutal beatings, nshots in the air. nts shut down an ated presidential ng it was a "head- sychological war." leadership cast g to accept the re- e as an enemy of alysts suggested ielding response Iran's leaders, supreme leader, hamenei, had lost hat Iran was now, r, a state guided of the revolution

## *Much Reviled, Afghan Leader Outwits Rivals*

### *Karzai Ahead in Polls, Imperiling U.S. Aims*

By DEXTER FILKINS

KABUL, Afghanistan — With a nationwide election only weeks away, the paradox of President Hamid Karzai has never seemed more apparent: he is at once deeply unpopular and likely to win.

Mr. Karzai, who has led Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, is blamed by many for the failures that have plagued the American-led mission here in the past eight years, from the resurgence of the Taliban to the explosion of the poppy trade.

Yet at the same time, Mr. Karzai enjoys a commanding lead in the race for the presidency, to be decided in a nationwide election on Aug. 20. Since the beginning of the year, Mr. Karzai has deftly outmaneuvered a once formidable array of opponents, either securing their backing or relegating them to the status of long shots.

Those two facts — Mr. Karzai's unpopularity and the likelihood of his victory — have cast a pall of resignation over the presidential campaign here, with many Af-



MARY ANN CHASTAIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gov. Mark Sanford of South Carolina, in a tearful, confessional news conference Wednesday.

## ENDING MYSTERY, A GOVERNOR SAYS HE HAD AN AFFAIR

### VANISHED TO ARGENTINA

### Confession, by Sanford of South Carolina, Raises Questions

By ROBBIE BROWN and SHAILA DEWAN

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Gov. Mark Sanford of South Carolina said Wednesday that he had been having an extramarital affair with a woman in Argentina for the last year, ending the mystery surrounding his disappearance over Father's Day weekend and considerably dampening his prospects for a national political career.

But his confession and apology, in a rambling, nationally televised news conference, left other mysteries unsolved, like whether he had lied to his staff members as late as Monday about his whereabouts, whether the affair had definitively ended, whether he would resign from the governorship and whether he would even have acknowledged the affair had he not been met at the airport in Atlanta by a reporter

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Ed
Today, becoming cooler, high 80. T clear and cool, low plenty of sunshin high 82. Weather

VOL. CLVIII .. No. 54,759 © 2009 The New York Times NEW YORK, THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2009

BEHROUZ MEHRI/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

**Iran's President Starts 2nd Term Amid Rifts**
President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was sworn in on Wednesday amid continuing discord in Iran's ruling elite. Page A6.

## *White House Affirms Deal On Drug Cost*

### *Will Block Any Move for Added Savings*

By DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK

WASHINGTON — Pressed by industry lobbyists, White House officials on Wednesday assured drug makers that the administration stood by a behind-the-scenes deal to block any Congressional effort to extract cost savings from them beyond an agreed-upon $80 billion.

Drug industry lobbyists reacted with alarm this week to a House health care overhaul measure that would allow the government to negotiate drug prices and demand additional rebates from drug manufacturers.

In response, the industry successfully demanded that the White House explicitly acknowledge for the first time that it had committed to protect drug makers from bearing further costs in the overhaul. The Obama administration had never spelled out the details of the agreement.

"We were assured: 'We need somebody to come in first. If you come in first, you will have a rock-solid deal.'" Billy Tauzin, the former Republican House member from Louisiana who now

U.S. TO OV
DETENTIO
FOR IMM

A 'TRULY CIV

Alternatives
Cells to Be S
Many Vi

By NINA BE

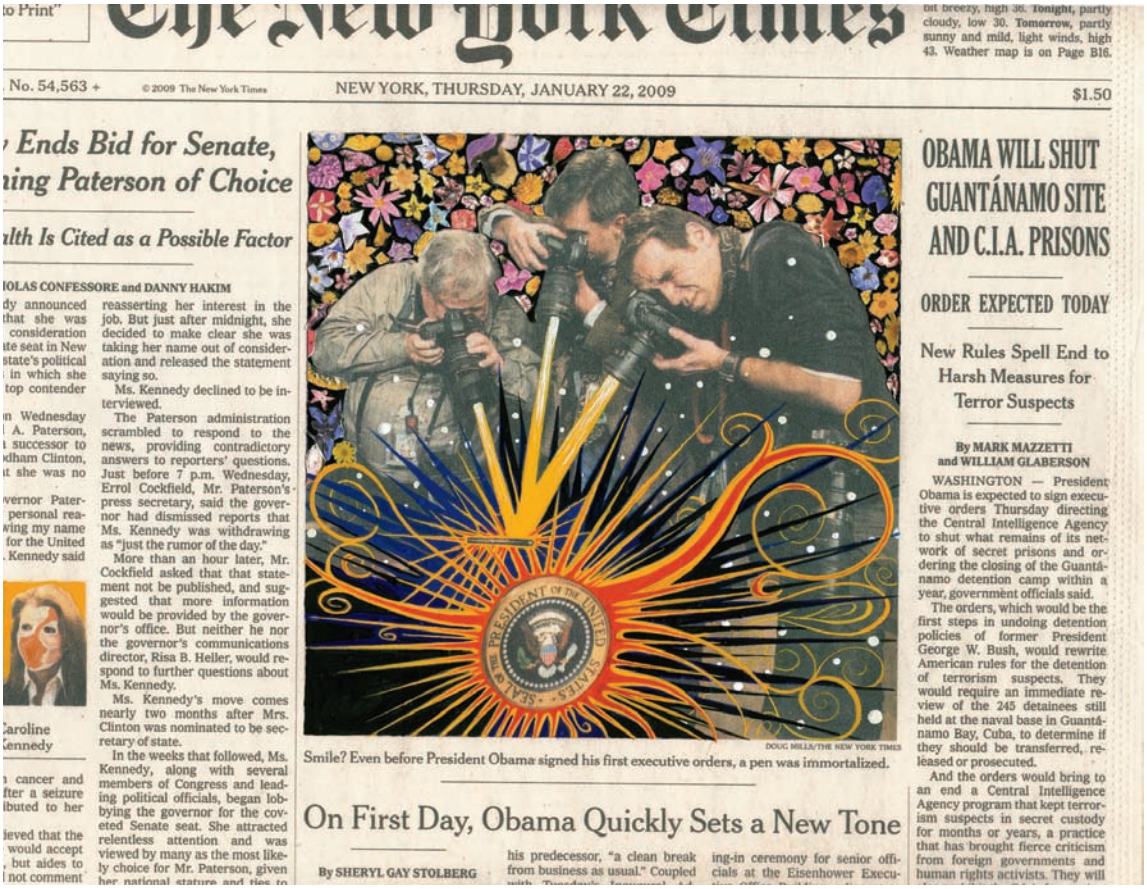
The Obama adm tends to announc plan on Thursday much-criticized w detains immigra trying to transfo patchwork of jail a to what its new "truly civil detenti

Details are sket the first steps will years to complete reviewing the fe ment's contracts 350 local jails and with an eye towar many detainees suitable for noncr deportation — so centers built and ernment.

The plan aims more centralized the system, whic 400,000 immigra

U.S. Reminds | 70 Murders, Yet Close to Going Free in Pakistan

*Jun. 25, 2009*, gouache and collage on printed watercolor paper
*Aug. 6, 2009*, collage on printed watercolor paper



to Print"

The New York Times

bit breezy, high 36. **Tonight,** partly cloudy, low 30. **Tomorrow,** partly sunny and mild, light winds, high 43. Weather map is on Page B16.

No. 54,563 + © 2009 The New York Times NEW YORK, THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2009 $1.50

## ...Ends Bid for Senate, ...ing Paterson of Choice

### ...lth Is Cited as a Possible Factor

...OLAS CONFESSORE and DANNY HAKIM

...dy announced ...that she was ... consideration ...te seat in New ...state's political ... in which she ... top contender ...n Wednesday ... A. Paterson, ... successor to ...dham Clinton, ...t she was no ...vernor Pater- ... personal rea- ...wing my name ... for the United ... Kennedy said

...Caroline ...Kennedy

... cancer and ...fter a seizure ...ibuted to her ...ieved that the ... would accept ..., but aides to ...l not comment

reasserting her interest in the job. But just after midnight, she decided to make clear she was taking her name out of consideration and released the statement saying so.

Ms. Kennedy declined to be interviewed.

The Paterson administration scrambled to respond to the news, providing contradictory answers to reporters' questions. Just before 7 p.m. Wednesday, Errol Cockfield, Mr. Paterson's press secretary, said the governor had dismissed reports that Ms. Kennedy was withdrawing as "just the rumor of the day."

More than an hour later, Mr. Cockfield asked that that statement not be published, and suggested that more information would be provided by the governor's office. But neither he nor the governor's communications director, Risa B. Heller, would respond to further questions about Ms. Kennedy.

Ms. Kennedy's move comes nearly two months after Mrs. Clinton was nominated to be secretary of state.

In the weeks that followed, Ms. Kennedy, along with several members of Congress and leading political officials, began lobbying the governor for the coveted Senate seat. She attracted relentless attention and was viewed by many as the most likely choice for Mr. Paterson, given her national stature and ties to



DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Smile? Even before President Obama signed his first executive orders, a pen was immortalized.

## On First Day, Obama Quickly Sets a New Tone

By SHERYL GAY STOLBERG

his predecessor, "a clean break from business as usual." Coupled ing-in ceremony for senior officials at the Eisenhower Execu-

## OBAMA WILL SHUT GUANTÁNAMO SITE AND C.I.A. PRISONS

### ORDER EXPECTED TODAY

### New Rules Spell End to Harsh Measures for Terror Suspects

By MARK MAZZETTI and WILLIAM GLABERSON

WASHINGTON — President Obama is expected to sign executive orders Thursday directing the Central Intelligence Agency to shut what remains of its network of secret prisons and ordering the closing of the Guantánamo detention camp within a year, government officials said.

The orders, which would be the first steps in undoing detention policies of former President George W. Bush, would rewrite American rules for the detention of terrorism suspects. They would require an immediate review of the 245 detainees still held at the naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to determine if they should be transferred, released or prosecuted.

And the orders would bring to an end a Central Intelligence Agency program that kept terrorism suspects in secret custody for months or years, a practice that has brought fierce criticism from foreign governments and human rights activists. They will

...News ... to Print"

The New York Times

**Late Edition**

**Today,** sunshine yielding to some clouds, high 53. **Tonight,** becoming mostly cloudy, low 42. **Tomorrow,** mainly cloudy, spotty showers, high 53. Weather map is on Page A18.

No. 54,849 © 2009 The New York Times NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2009 $6 beyond the greater New York metropolitan area. $2.00

# ...OMBERG WINS 3RD TERM IN TIGHT RACE; ...RISTIE TOPS CORZINE; VIRGINIA GOES G.O.P.

## ...n Strong ...mpaign ...layor

...W. CHEN ...L. BARBARO

...el R. Bloomberg ...rrow re-election ...ay, as voters an- ...neuver to undo ...mits law and his ...paign spending ...pected lift to his ...nced challenger, ...pson Jr.

...ent of the vote ...fficial returns ...omberg with 51 ... Thompson with ...result will make ... only the fourth ...r in the last cen-

... wisdom says ...l terms haven't ...sful," the mayor ... at the Sheraton ...n Midtown Man- ...nidnight after a ...atching returns. ...t the last eight ...onventional wis-

...gin seemed to

CHRISTOPHER BARTH/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Christopher J. Christie greeted supporters Tuesday night after defeating Gov. Jon S. Corzine in a race defined by the economy.

## *Governor's Races Seen as Jolts for Obama*

By DAVID M. HALBFINGER and IAN URBINA

Republicans swept contests for governor in New Jersey and Virginia on Tuesday as voters went to the polls filled with economic uncertainty, dealing President Obama a setback and building momentum for a Republican comeback attempt in next year's midterm Congressional elections.

But in a closely watched Congressional race in upstate New York, a Democrat who received a late push from the White House triumphed over a conservative candidate who attracted national backers ranging from Rush Limbaugh to Sarah Palin, the former Alaska governor.

In New Jersey, a former federal prosecutor, Christopher J. Christie, became the first Republican to win statewide in 12 years by vowing to attack the state's fiscal problems with the same aggressiveness he used to lock up corrupt politicians.

He overcame a huge Demo-

*Jan. 22, 2009*, gouache and collage on printed watercolor paper
*Nov. 4, 2009*, gouache on printed watercolor paper

# HAMMER AND SICKLE

*By Don DeLillo*

We walked across the highway bridge, thirty-nine of us in jumpsuits and tennis sneakers, with guards front and back and at the flanks, six in all. Beneath us the cars were blasting by, nonstop, their speed magnified by our near vantage and by the sound they made passing under the low bridge. There's no word for it, that sound, pure urgency, sustained, incessant, northbound, southbound, and each time we walked across the overpass I wondered again who those people were, the drivers and passengers, so many cars, the pressing nature of their passage, the lives inside.

I had time to notice such things, time to reflect. It's a killing business, reflection, even in the lowest levels of security, where there are distractions, openings into the former world. The inmate soccer game at the abandoned high school field across the highway was a breezy departure from the daily binding and squeezing of meal lines, head counts, regulations, reflections. The players rode a bus, the spectators walked, the cars zoomed beneath the bridge.

I walked alongside a man named Sylvan Telfair, tall, bald, steeped in pathos, an international banker who'd dealt in rarefied instruments of offshore finance.

"You follow soccer?"

"I don't follow anything," he said.

"But it's worth watching under the circumstances, right? Which is exactly how I feel."

"I follow nothing," he said.

"My name's Jerold."

"Very good," he said.

The camp was not enclosed by stone walls or coiled razor wire. The only perimeter fencing was a scenic artifact now, a set of old wooden posts that supported sagging rails. There were four dormitories with bunk-bed cubicles, toilets, and showers. There were several structures to accommodate inmate orientation, meals, medical care, TV viewing, gym work, visits from family and others. There were conjugal hours for those so yoked.

"You can call me Jerry," I said.

I knew that Sylvan Telfair had been denied a special detention suite with audiovisual systems, private bath, smoking privileges, and a toaster oven. There were only four of these in the camp and the man seemed, in bearing alone, in his emotional distance

*Don DeLillo is the author of numerous novels, including, most recently,* Point Omega *(Scribner).*

Photograph by Jason Fulford

and discreet pain, to be entitled to special consideration. Stuck in the dorms, I thought. This must have seemed a life sentence wedged into the nine years he'd brought with him from Switzerland or Liechtenstein or the Cayman Islands.

I wanted to know something about the man's methodology, the scale of his crimes, but I was reluctant to ask and he was certain not to answer. I'd been here only two months and was still trying to figure out who I wanted to be in this setting, how I ought to stand, sit, walk, talk. Sylvan Telfair knew who he was. He was a long-striding man in a well-pressed jumpsuit and spotless white sneakers, laces knotted oddly behind the ankles, a man formally absent from his slightest word or gesture.

The traffic noise was a ripple at the treetops by the time we reached the edge of the camp complex.

When I was in my early teens I came across the word *phantasm*. A great word, I thought, and I wanted to be phantasmal, someone who slips in and out of physical reality. Now here I am, a floating fever dream, but where's the rest of it, the dense surround, the thing with weight and shape? There's a man here who aspires to be a biblical scholar. His head is bent severely to one side, nearly resting on his left shoulder, the result of an unnamed affliction. I admire the man, I'd like to talk to him, tilting my head slightly, feeling secure in the depths of his scholarship, the languages, cultures, documents, rituals. And the head itself, is there anything here more real than this?

There's another man, who runs everywhere, the Dumb Runner he's called, but he's doing something obsessive and true, outside the margins of our daily protocols. He has a heartbeat, a racing pulse. And then the gamblers, men betting surreptitiously on football, engaged all week in the cross talk of point spreads, bunk to bunk, meal to meal, Eagles minus four, Rams getting eight and a half. Is this virtual money they're betting? Stand near them when they talk and it's real, touchable, and so are they, gesturing operatically, numbers flashing neon in the air.

We watched TV in one of the common rooms. There was a large flat screen, wall-mounted, certain channels blocked, programs selected by one of the veteran inmates, a different man each month. On this day only five places were occupied in the eighty or so folding chairs in the arched rows. I was here to see a particular program, an afternoon news broadcast, fifteen minutes, on a children's channel. One segment was a stock-market report. Two girls, earnestly amateurish, reported on the day's market activity.

I was the only one watching the show. The other inmates sat half-dazed, heads down. It was a matter of time of day, time of year, dusk nearly upon us, the depressive specter of last light stirring at the oblong windows high on one wall. The men sat distanced from one another, here to be alone. This was the call to self-examination, the second-guessing of a lost life, no less compelling than the believer's call to prayer.

I watched and listened. The girls were my daughters, Laurie and Kate, ten and twelve. Their mother had told me, curtly, over the phone, that the kids had been selected to appear on such a program. No details available, she said, at the present time, as if she were reporting, herself, from a desk in a studio humming with off-camera tensions.

I sat in the second row, alone, and there they were, sharing a table, speaking about fourth-quarter estimates, first one girl, then the other, a couple of sentences at a time, credit quality, credit demand, the tech sector, the budget deficit. The picture had the quality of online video, user-generated. I tried to detach myself, to see the girls as distant references to my daughters, in jittery black and white. I studied them. I observed. They read their lines from pages held in their hands, each looking up from the page as she yielded to the other reader.

Did it seem crazy, a market report for kids? There was nothing sweet or charming about the commentary. The girls were not playing at being adult. They were dutiful, blending occasional definitions and explanations into the news, and then Laurie's eyes showed fleeting panic in her remarks about the NASDAQ Composite—a mangled word, a missing sentence. I took the report to be a tentative segment of a barely noticed show on an obscure cable channel. It wasn't any crazier, probably, than most TV, and anyway who was watching?

My bunkmate wore socks to bed. He tucked his pajama legs into the socks and lay on his bunk, knees up and hands folded behind his head.

"I miss my walls," he said.

He had the lower bunk. This was a matter of some significance in the camp, top or bottom, who gets what, like every prison movie we'd ever seen. Norman was senior to me in age, experience, ego, and time served, and I had no reason to complain.

I thought of telling him that we all miss our walls, we miss our floors and ceilings. But I sat and waited for him to continue.

"I used to sit and look. One wall, then another. After a while I'd get up and walk around the apartment, slowly, looking, wall to wall. Sit and look, stand and look."

He seemed to be under a spell, reciting a bedtime story he'd heard as a child.

"You collected art, is that it?"

"That's it, past tense, collected. Major-museum quality."

"You've never mentioned this," I said.

"I've been here how long? They're somebody else's walls now. The art is scattered."

"You had advisers, experts on the art market."

"People used to come and look at my walls. Europe, Los Angeles, a Japanese man from some foundation in Japan."

He sat quietly for a time, remembering. I found myself remembering with him. The Japanese man took on distinct features, a certain configuration, portly, it seemed, pale suit, dark tie.

"Collectors, curators, students. They came and looked," he said.

"Who advised you?"

"I had a woman on Fifty-seventh Street. There was a guy in London, Colin, knew everything about the post-impressionists. A dear sweet man."

"You don't really mean that."

"It's something people say. One of those expressions that sound like someone else is talking. A dear sweet man."

"A loving wife and mother."

"I was happy to have them look. All of them," he said. "I used to look with them. We'd go picture to picture, room to room. I had a house in the Hudson Valley, more paintings, some sculpture. I went there in the autumn for the fall colors. But I barely looked out the windows."

"You had the walls."

"I couldn't take my eyes off the walls."

"And then you had to sell."

"All of it, every last piece. Pay fines, pay debts, pay legal fees, provide for family. Gave an etching to my daughter. A snowy night in Norway."

Norman missed his walls but he was not unhappy here. He was content, he said, unstuck, unbound, remote. He was free of the swollen needs and demands of others and mostly disentangled from his personal drives, his grabbiness, the lifelong mandate to accrue, expand, construct himself, to buy a hotel chain, make a name. He was at peace here, he said.

I lay on the top bunk, eyes closed, listening. Throughout the building men in their cubicles, one talking, one listening, both silent, one sleeping, tax delinquents, alimony delinquents, insider traders, perjurers, hedge-fund felons, mail fraud, mortgage fraud, securities fraud, accounting fraud, obstruction of justice.

Word began to spread. By the third day most of the chairs in the common room were occupied and I had to settle for a place near the end of the fifth row. On-screen the girls were reporting on a situation rapidly developing in the United Arab Emirates.

"The word is Dubai."

"This is the word crossing continents and oceans at the shocking speed of light."

"Markets are sinking quickly."

"Paris, Frankfurt, London."

"Dubai has the worst debt per capita in the world," Kate said. "And now its building boom has crumbled and it can't pay the banks what it owes them."

"It owes them 58 billion dollars," Laurie said.

"Give or take a few billion."

"The DAX in Germany."

"Down more than 3 percent."

"The Royal Bank of Scotland."

"Down more than 4 percent."

"The word is Dubai."

"This debt-ridden city state is asking banks to grant six-months' freedom from debt repayments."

"Dubai," Laurie said.

"The cost of insuring Dubai's debt against default has increased one, two, three, four times."

"Do we know what that means?"

"It means the Dow Jones Industrial Average is down, down, down."

"Deutsche Bank."

"Down."

"London—the FTSE 100 Index."

"Down."

"Amsterdam—ING Group."

"Down."

"The Hang Seng in Hong Kong."

"Crude oil. Islamic bonds."

"Down, down, down."

"The word is Dubai."

"Say it."

"Dubai," Kate said.

The old life rewrites itself every minute. In four years I'll still be here, puddling horribly in this dim waste. The free future is hard to imagine. I have trouble enough tracing the shape of the knowable past. There is no steadfast element, no faith or truth except for the girls, being born, getting bigger, living.

Where was I when this was happening? I was acquiring meaningless degrees, teaching a freshman course in the dynamics of reality TV. I changed the spelling of my first name to Jerold. I used my index and middle fingers to place quote marks around certain ironic comments I made and sometimes used index fingers only, setting off a quotation within another quotation. It was that kind of life, self-mocking, and neither the marriage nor the business I briefly ran seems to have happened in any fixed consideration. I'm thirty-eight years old, a generation removed from some of the inmates here, and I don't remember knowing why I did what I did to put myself in this place. There was a time in early English law when a felony was punishable by removal of one of the felon's body parts. Would this be an incentive to modern memory?




## Hear the buzz?

### It's about the new Electric Rabbit.

The display screen shows how many corks you can pull before re-charging. The compact design is up to 3 inches shorter than other electric corkscrews. The recessed spiral fits neatly over a wine bottle. The Electric Rabbit has plenty to be abuzz about.

***Where To Go Electric Rabbit Hunting:***
Crate & Barrel, Macy's, Dillard's, Sur La Table, Chef's Catalog, Spec's, Le Gourmet Chef, Kitchen Kapers, Total Wine and More, BevMo!

metrokane
metrokane.com

I imagine myself being here forever, it's already forever, eating another meal with the political consultant who licks his thumb to pick bread crumbs off the plate and stare at them, or standing in line behind the investment banker who talks to himself aloud in beginner's Mandarin. I think about money. What did I know about it, how much did I need it, what would I do when I got it? Then I think about Sylvan Telfair, aloof in his craving, the billion-euro profit being separable from the things it bought, money the coded impulse, ideational, a kind of discreet erection known only to the man whose pants are on fire.

"The fear continues to grow."

"Fear of numbers, fear of spreading losses."

"The fear is Dubai. The talk is Dubai. Dubai has the debt. Is it 58 billion dollars or 80 billion dollars?"

"Bankers are pacing marble floors."

"Or is it 120 billion dollars?"

"Sheiks are gazing into hazy skies."

"Even the numbers are panicking."

"Think of the prominent investors. Hollywood stars. Famous footballers."

"Think of islands shaped like palm trees. People skiing in a shopping mall."

"The world's only seven-star hotel."

"The world's richest horse race."

"The world's tallest building."

"All this in Dubai."

"Taller than the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building combined."

"Combined."

"Swim in the pool on the seventy-sixth floor. Pray in the mosque on the one hundred and fifty-eighth floor."

"But where is the oil?"

"Dubai has no oil. Dubai has debt. Dubai has a huge number of foreign workers with nowhere to work."

"Enormous office buildings stand empty. Apartment buildings unfinished in blowing sand. Think of the blowing sand. Dust storms concealing the landscape. Empty storefronts in every direction."

"But where is the oil?"

"The oil is in Abu Dhabi. Say the name."

"Abu Dhabi."

"Now let's say it together."

"Abu Dhabi," they said.

It was Feliks Zuber, the oldest inmate at the camp, who'd chosen the children's program for viewing. Feliks was here every day now, front row center, carrying with him a sentence of seven hundred and twenty years. He liked to turn and nod at those nearby, making occasional applause gestures without bringing his trembling hands into contact, a small crumpled man, looking nearly old enough to be on the verge of outliving his sentence, tinted glasses, purple jumpsuit, hair dyed death black.

The length of his sentence impressed the rest of us. It was a term handed down for his master manipulation of an investment scheme involving four countries and leading to the collapse of two governments and three corporations, with much of the money channeled in the direction of arms shipments to rebels in a breakaway enclave of the Caucasus.

The breadth of his crimes warranted a far more stringent environment than this one, but he'd been sent here because he was riddled with disease, his future marked in weeks and days. Men were sometimes sent here to die, in easeful circumstances. We knew it from their faces, mainly, the attenuated range of vision, the sensory withdrawal, and from the stillness they brought with them, a cloistered manner, as if bound by vows. Feliks was not still. He smiled, waved, bounced, and shook. He sat on the edge of his chair when the girls delivered news of falling markets and stunned economies. He was a man watching an ancient truism unfold on wide-screen TV. He would take the world with him when he died.

The soccer field was part of a haunted campus. A grade school and high school had been closed because the county did not have the resources to maintain them. The antiquated buildings were partly demolished now, a few wrecking machines still there, asquat in mud.

The inmates were glad to keep the field in playable condition, chalking the lines and arcs, planting corner flags, sinking the goals firmly into the ground.

The games were an earnest pastime for the players, men mostly middle-aged, a few older, two or three younger, all in makeshift uniforms, running, standing, walking, crouching, often simply bending from the waist, breathless, hands on knees, looking into the scuffed turf where their lives were mired.

There were fewer spectators as the days grew colder, then fewer players. I kept showing up, blowing on my hands, beating my arms across my chest. The teams were coached by inmates, the games refereed by inmates, and those of us watching from the three rows of old broken bleacher seats were inmates. The guards stood around, here and there, watching and not.

The games became stranger. Rules were invented, broken, and abridged, a fight started now and then, the game going on around it. I kept waiting for a player to be stricken, a heart attack, a convulsive collapse. The spectators rarely cheered or moaned. It began to feel like nowhere, men moving in the dreamy distance, referees on the sidelines sharing a cigarette. We walked across the bridge, watched the game, walked back across the bridge.

I thought about soccer in history, the inspiration for wars, truces, rampaging mobs. The game was a global passion, spherical ball, grass or turf, entire nations in spasms of elation or lament. But what kind of sport is it that disallows the use of players' hands, except for the goalkeepers'? Hands are essential human tools, the things that grasp and hold, that make, take, carry, create. If soccer were an American invention, wouldn't some European intellectual maintain that our historically puritanical nature has compelled us to invent a game structured on anti-masturbatory principles?

This is one of the things I think about that I never had to think about before.

The notable fact about Norman Bloch, my bunkmate, was not the art that used to hang on his walls. What impressed me was the crime he'd committed. This was itself a kind of art, conceptual in nature, radical in scale, a deed so casual and yet so transgressive that Norman, here a year, would

be spending six more years in the camp, the bunk, the clinic, the meal lines, in the squalling noise of the hand dryers in the toilets.

Norman did not pay taxes. He did not file quarterly reports or annual returns and he did not request extensions. He did not backdate documents, establish trusts or foundations, open secret accounts or utilize the ready mechanisms of offshore jurisdictions. He was not a political or religious protester. He was not a nihilist, rejecting all values and institutions. He was completely transparent. He just didn't pay. It was a kind of lethargy, he said, the way people avoid doing the dishes or making the bed.

I brightened at that. Doing the dishes, making the bed. He said he didn't know exactly how long it was since he'd last paid taxes. When I asked about his financial advisers, his business associates, he shrugged, or so I imagined. I was in the top bunk, he was in the bottom, two men in pajamas, passing the time.

"Those girls. Pretty amazing," he said. "And the news, especially the bad news."

"You like the bad news."

"We all like the bad news. Even the girls like the bad news."

I thought of telling him that they were my daughters. No one here knew this and it was better that way. I didn't want the men in the dorm looking at me, talking to me, spreading the word throughout the camp. I was learning how to disappear. It suited me, it was my natural state, day by day, to be phantasmal again.

Best not to speak of the girls.

Then I spoke of them, quietly, in six or seven words. There was a long pause. He had a round face, Norman, with a squat nose, his bushy hair going gray.

"You never said this, Jerry."

"Just between us."

"You never say anything."

"Just to you. No one else. It's true," I said. "Kate and Laurie. I sit and watch them and it's hard to understand how any of this happened. What are they doing there, what am I doing here? Their mother writes the reports. She didn't tell me this but I know it's her. She's masterminding the whole thing."

"What's she like, their mother?"

"We're legally separated."

"What's she like?" he said.

"Fairly smart, like in a cutting-edge way. Sneaky sort of pretty. You have to pay attention to see it."

"You still love her? I don't think I ever loved my wife. Not in the original meaning of the word."

I didn't ask what he meant by that.

"Did your wife love you?"

"She loved my walls," he said.

"I love my kids."

"You love their mother too. I can sense it," he said.

"From where, the lower bunk? You can't even see my face."

"I've seen your face. What's to see?"

"We fell apart. We didn't drift apart, we fell apart."

"Don't tell me I'm not right. I sense things. I read into things," he said.

I looked into the ceiling. It had rained for several hours and I thought I could hear traffic noise on the wet highway, cars racing beneath the overpass, drivers leaning into the night, trying to read the road at every flex and bend.

"I'll tell you what it's like. It's like they're playing a game," he said. "All those names they're saying. The Hang Seng in Hong Kong. That's funny to a kid. And when kids say it, it's funny to us. And I'll make you a bet. Plenty of kids are watching that report and not because it's on a kids' channel. They're watching because it's funny. What the hell's the Hang Seng in Hong Kong? I don't know. Do you know?"

"Their mother knows."

"I'll bet she does. She also knows it's a game, all of it. And all of it's funny. You're lucky," he said. "Terrific kids."

Happy here, that was Norman. We're not in prison, he liked to say. We're at camp.

Over time the situation in the Gulf began to ease. Abu Dhabi provided a 10-billion-dollar bailout and relative calm soon moved into the region and across the digital networks to markets everywhere. This brought on a letdown in the common room. Even as the girls showed improvement in their delivery and signs of serious preparation, the men stopped coming in large numbers and soon there was only a scatter of us, here and there, sleepy and reflective.

We had TV but what had we lost, all of us, when we entered the camp? We'd lost our appendages, our extensions, the data systems that kept us fed and cleansed. Where was the world, our world? The laptops were gone, the smartphones and light sensors and megapixels. Our hands and eyes needed more than we could give them now. The touch-screens, the mobile platforms, the gentle bell reminders of an appointment or a flight time or a woman in a room somewhere. And the sense, the tacit awareness, now lost, that something newer, smarter, faster, ever faster, was just a bird's breath away. Also lost was the techno anxiety that these devices routinely carried with them. But we needed this no less than we did the devices themselves, that inherent stress, those cautions and frustrations. Weren't these essential to our mind-set? The prospect of failed signals and crashed systems, the memory that needs recharging, the identity stolen in a series of clicks. Information, this was everything, coming in, going out. We were always on, wanted to be on, needed to be on, but this was history now, the shadow of another life.

Okay, we were grown-ups, not bug-eyed kids in tribal bondage, and this was not an Internet rescue camp. We lived in real space, unaddicted, free of deadly dependence. But we were bereft. We were pulpy and slumped. It was a thing we rarely talked about, a thing that was hard to shake. There were the small idle moments when we knew exactly what we were missing. We sat on the toilet, flushed and done, staring into empty hands.

I wanted to find myself in front of the TV set for the market report, weekdays, four in the afternoon, but could not always manage. I was part of a work detail that was bused on designated days to the adjacent Air Force base, where we sanded and painted, did general maintenance, hauled garbage and sometimes just

stood and watched as a fighter jet roared down the runway and lifted into the low sun. It was a beautiful thing to see, aircraft climbing, wheels up, wings pivoting back, the light, the streaked sky, three or four of us, not a word spoken. Was this the time, more than a thousand other moments, when the measure of our ruin was brought to starkest awareness?

"All of Europe is looking south. What do they see?"

"They see Greece."

"They see fiscal instability, enormous debt burden, possible default."

"*Crisis* is a Greek word."

"Is Greece hiding its public debt?"

"Is the crisis spreading at lightning speed to the rest of the southern tier, to the eurozone in general, to emerging markets everywhere?"

"Does Greece need a bailout?"

"Will Greece abandon the euro?"

"Did Greece hide the nature of its debt?"

"What is Wall Street's role in this critical matter?"

"What is a credit-default swap? What is a sovereign default? What is a special-purpose entity?"

"We don't know. Do you know? Do you care?"

"What is Wall Street? Who is Wall Street?"

Tense laughter from pockets in the audience.

"Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy."

"Stocks plunge worldwide."

"The Dow, the NASDAQ, the euro, the pound."

"But where are the walkouts, the work stoppages, the job actions?"

"Look at Greece. Look in the streets."

"Riots, strikes, protests, pickets."

"All of Europe is looking at Greece."

"*Chaos* is a Greek word."

"Canceled flights, burning flags, stones flying this way, tear gas sailing that way."

"Workers are angry. Workers are marching."

"Blame the worker. Bury the worker."

"Freeze their pay. Increase their tax."

"Steal from the worker. Screw the worker."

"Any day now, wait and see."

"New flags, new banners."

"Hammer and sickle."

"Hammer and sickle."

Their mother had the girls delivering lines in a balanced flow, a cadence. They weren't just reading, they were acting, showing facial expression, having serious fun. Screw the worker, Kate had said. At least their mother had assigned the vulgar line to the older girl.

All day long the story passed through the camp, building to building, man to man. It concerned a convict on death row in Texas or Missouri or Oklahoma and the last words he'd spoken before an individual authorized by the state injected the lethal substance or activated the electric current.

The words were, *Kick the tires and light the fire—I'm going home.*

Some of us felt a chill, hearing the story. Were we shamed by it? Did we think of that man on the honed edge of his last breath as more authentic than we were, a true outlaw, worthy of the state's most cruelly scrupulous attention? His end was officially sanctioned, an act welcomed by some, protested by some. If he'd spent half a lifetime in prison cells, in solitary confinement and finally on death row for one or two or multiple homicides, where were we and what had we done to be placed here? Did we even remember our crimes? Could we call them crimes? They were loopholes, evasions, wheedling half-assed infractions.

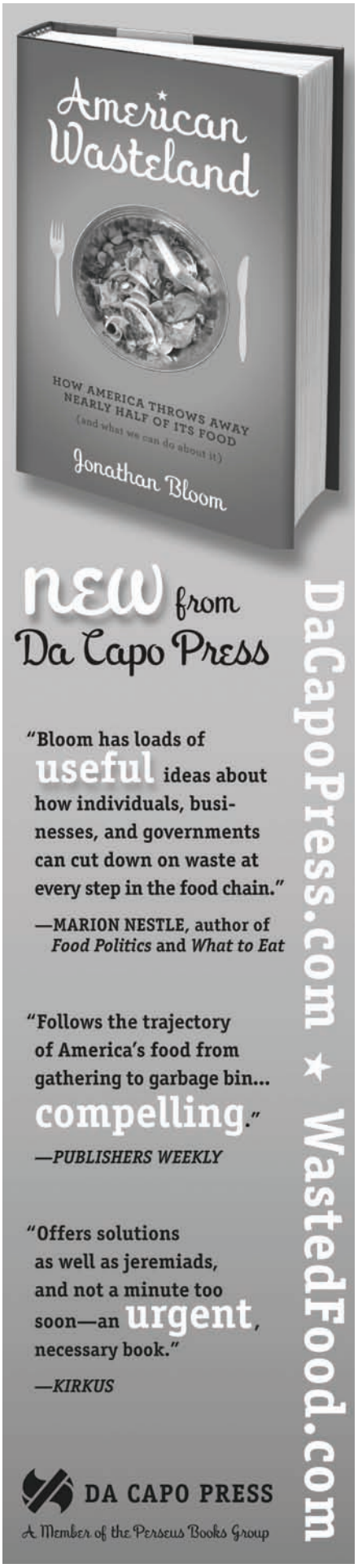
Some of us, less self-demeaning, simply nodded at the story, conveying credit to the man for the honor he'd brought to the moment, the back-country poetry of those words. By the third time I heard the story, or overheard it, the prison was located decisively in Texas. Forget the other places—the man, the story, and the prison all belonged in Texas. We were somewhere else, watching a children's program on TV.

"What's this business about hammer and sickle?"

"Means nothing. Words," I said. "Like Abu Dhabi."

"The Hang Seng in Hong Kong."




American Wasteland
HOW AMERICA THROWS AWAY NEARLY HALF OF ITS FOOD
(and what we can do about it)
Jonathan Bloom
new from Da Capo Press
"Bloom has loads of useful ideas about how individuals, businesses, and governments can cut down on waste at every step in the food chain."
—MARION NESTLE, author of Food Politics and What to Eat
"Follows the trajectory of America's food from gathering to garbage bin... compelling."
—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY
"Offers solutions as well as jeremiads, and not a minute too soon—an urgent, necessary book."
—KIRKUS
DA CAPO PRESS
A Member of the Perseus Books Group
DaCapoPress.com ★ WastedFood.com

"Exactly."

"The girls like saying it. Hammer and sickle."

"Hammer and sickle."

"Abu Dhabi."

"Abu Dhabi."

"Hang Seng."

"Hong Kong," I said.

We went on like that for a while. Norman was still murmuring the names when I shut my eyes and began the long turn toward sleep.

"But I think she means it. I think she's serious. Hammer and sickle," he said. "She's a serious woman with a point to make."

I stood watching from a distance. They passed through the metal detector, one by one, and moved toward the visitors' center, the wives and children, the loyal friends, the business partners, the lawyers who would sit and listen in a confidential setting as inmates stared at them through tight eyes and complained about the food, the job assignments, the scarcity of sentence reductions.

Everything seemed flat. The visitors on the footpath moved slowly and monochromatically. The sky was barely there, drained of light and weather. Families were bundled and wan but I didn't feel the cold. I was standing outside the dormitory but could have been anywhere. I imagined a woman walking among the others, slim and dark-haired, unaccompanied. I don't know where she came from, a photograph I'd once seen, or a movie, possibly French, set in Southeast Asia, sex beneath a ceiling fan. Here, she was wearing a long white tunic and loose trousers. She belonged to another setting, this was clear, but there was no need for me to wonder what she was doing here. She'd come up out of the drowsy mind or down from the flat sky.

There was a name for the outfit she was wearing and I nearly knew it, nearly had it, then it slipped away. But the woman was there, still, in pale sandals, the tunic slit on the sides, with a faint floral design front and back.

The ceiling fan turned slowly in the heavy heat, a thought I didn't want or need, but there it was, more thought than image, going back years.

Who was the man she was here to see? I was expecting no visitors, didn't want them, not even my daughters, not right for them to see me here. They were 2,000 miles away in any case, and otherwise engaged. Could I place the woman in my immediate presence, face to face across a table in the large open space that would soon be filled with inmates, wives and kids, a guard at an elevated desk, keeping watch?

One thing I knew. The name of her outfit was two words, brief words, and it would make me feel the day was worthwhile, the full week, if I could remember those words. What else was there to do? What else could I think about that might yield a decent measure of completion?

Vietnamese—the words, the tunic, the trousers, the woman.

Then I thought of Sylvan Telfair. He was the inmate she was here to see, a man of worldwide address. They'd met in Paris or Bangkok. They'd stood on a terrace in the evening, sipping wine and speaking French. He was refined and assured and at the same time somewhat reticent, a man to whom she might be attracted, even if she was my idea, my secret silken vision.

I stood watching, thinking.

By the time the words came to me, much later in the day, *ao dai,* I'd lost all interest in the matter.

We were grouped, clustered, massed, paired, men everywhere, living in swarms, filling every space, arrayed across the limits of vision. I liked to think of us as men in Maoist self-correction, perfecting our social being through repetition. We worked, ate, and slept in mechanized routine, weekly, daily, hourly, advancing from practice to knowledge. But these were the musings of idle time. Maybe we were just tons of assimilated meat, our collected flesh built into cubicles, containered in dormitories and dining halls, zippered into jumpsuits in five colors, classified, catalogued, this color for that level of offense. The colors struck me as a kind of comic pathos, always there, brightly clashing, jutting, crisscrossing. I tried not to think of us as circus clowns who'd forgotten their face paint.

"You consider her your enemy," Norman said. "You and her, blood enemies."

"I don't think that's true."

"It's only natural. You think she's using the girls against you. This is what you believe, down deep, whether you admit it or not."

"I don't think that's the case."

"That has to be the case. She's attacking you for the mistakes you made in business. What was your business? How did it get you here? I don't think you ever said."

"It's not interesting."

"We're not here to be interesting."

"I ran a company for a man who acquired companies. Information got passed back and forth. Money changed hands. Lawyers, traders, consultants, senior partners."

"Who was the man?"

"He was my father," I said.

"What's his name?"

"He died quietly before the fact."

"What fact?"

"The fact of my conviction."

"What's his name?"

"Walter Bradway."

"Do I know that name?"

"You know his brother's name. Howard Bradway."

"One of the hedge-fund musketeers," he said.

Norman was searching his memory for visual confirmation. I pictured what he was picturing. He was picturing my uncle Howie, a large ruddy man, bare-chested, in aviator glasses, with a miniature poodle huddled in the crook of his arm. A fairly famous image.

"A family tradition. Is that it?" he said. "Different companies, different cities, different time frames."

"They believed in right and wrong. The right and wrong of the markets, the portfolios, the insider information."

"Then it was your turn to join the business. Did you know what you were doing?"

"I was defining myself. That's what my father said. He said people who have to define themselves belong in the dictionary."

"Because you strike me as somebody who doesn't always know what he's doing."

"I pretty much knew. I definitely knew."

I could hear Norman unraveling the improvised cellophane wrap on his little jar of fig spread and then using his finger to rub the stuff across a saltine cracker. On visitors' days his lawyer smuggled a jar of Dalmatian fig spread into the camp, minus the metal cap. Norman said he liked the name, Dalmatia, Dalmatian, the Balkan history, the Adriatic, the large spotted dog. He liked the idea of having food of that particular name and place, all natural ingredients, and eating it on a standard cafeteria cracker, undercover, a couple of times a week.

He said that his lawyer was a woman and that she concealed the fig spread somewhere on her body. This was a throwaway line, delivered in a monotone and not intended to be believed.

"What's your philosophy of money?"

"I don't have one," I said.

"There was the year I made a shitpile of money. One year in particular. We could be talking, total, easy nine figures. I could feel it adding years to my life. Money makes you live longer. It seeps into the bloodstream, into the veins and capillaries. I talked to my primary-care physician about this. He said he had an inkling I could be right."

"What about the art on your walls? Make you live longer?"

"I don't know about the art. Good question, the art."

"People say great art is immortal. I say there's something mortal in it. It carries a glimpse of death."

"All those gorgeous paintings, the shapes and colors. All those dead painters. I don't know," he said.

He lifted his hand toward my bunk, up and around, with a splotch of fig preserves on half a cracker. I declined, but thanks. I heard him chewing the cracker and sinking into the sheets. Then I lay waiting for the final remarks of the day.

"She's talking directly to you. You realize this, using the girls."

"I don't think so, not even remotely."

"In other words this never occurred to you."

"Everything occurs to me. Some things I reject.

"What's her name?"

"Sara Massey."

"Good and direct. I see her as a strong woman with roots going back a long way. Principles, convictions. Getting revenge for your illegal activities, for the fact you got caught, maybe for joining your father's business in the first place."

"How smart I am not to know this. What grief it spares me."

"This sneaky-pretty woman, in your words. She's reminding you what you did. She's talking to you. Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi. Hang Seng, Hong Kong."

All around us, entombed in cubicles, suspended in time, reliably muted now, men with dental issues, medical issues, marital issues, dietary demands, psychic frailties, sleep-breathing men, the nightly drone of oil-tax schemes, tax-shelter schemes, corporate espionage, corporate bribery, false testimony, Medicare fraud, inheritance fraud, real estate fraud, wire fraud, fraud and conspiracy.

They started arriving early, men crowding the common room, some carrying extra folding chairs, snapping them open. There were others standing in the side aisles, a spillover of inmates, guards, kitchen staff, camp officials. I'd managed to squeeze into the fourth row, slightly off center. The sense of event, news in high rumble, all the convergences of emotional global forces bringing us here in a wave of complex expectation.

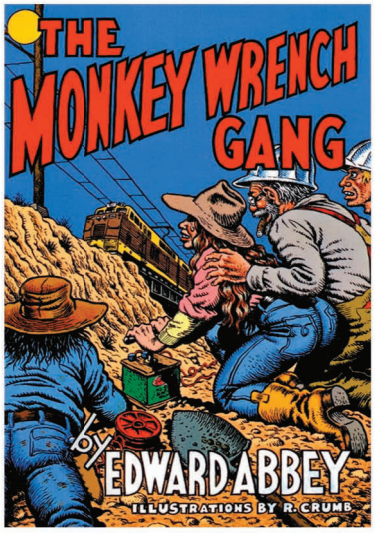
A cluster of rain-swept blossoms was fixed to one of the high windows. Spring, more or less, late this year.

There were four common rooms, one for each dorm, and I was certain that all were packed, inmates and others collected in some odd harmonic, listening to children talk about economic collapse.

Here, as time approached, Feliks Zuber rose briefly from his seat up front, raising a weary hand to quiet the settling crowd.

I noticed at once that the girls wore matching jackets. This was new. The picture was sharper and steadier, in color. Then I realized they were seated at a long desk, a news desk, not an ordinary table. Finally the scripts—there





© 2010 DREAM GARDEN PRESS, R CRUMB

Books & T-Shirts Available
BOOKS $25 T-SHIRTS $18

KEN SANDERS
RARE BOOKS

WWW.KENSANDERSBOOKS.COM
801.521.3819
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

## SUBSCRIBER ALERT

Dear *Harper's* Subscribers,

It has come to our attention that several of our subscribers have received renewal notifications from an independent magazine clearinghouse doing business under the names Magazine Billing Services, Publishers Processing Services Inc., American Consumer Publish Assoc., Publisher's Periodical Service, Magazine Billing Network, and Crown Marketing. These companies have not been authorized to sell subscriptions on behalf of *Harper's Magazine*.

If you receive a renewal notice and are unsure of its authenticity, please call our subscriber-care department and order your renewal through them. You may contact subscriber services by calling our toll-free number, (800) 444–4653, or via the Web at www.harpers.org.

**"One helluva team of writers has produced a book you'll be dipping into for years."**
**—Jim Bouton, author of *Ball Four***

**RULES OF THE GAME**
**THE BEST SPORTS WRITING FROM *HARPER'S MAGAZINE***
**Preface by Roy Blount Jr.**

***Rules of the Game: The Best Sports Writing from Harper's Magazine*** uncovers funny, touching, exciting, intriguing stories of the sporting life, both professional and amateur. These essays show that how we play and write about sports reflects and celebrates our nation's character.

This collection includes some of the most well-known and respected writers of the past century, including **Mark Twain, Tom Wolfe, Shirley Jackson, Lewis H. Lapham, Gary Cartwright, A. Bartlett Giamatti, Pete Axthelm, George Plimpton,** and **Rich Cohen.**

Edited by Matthew Stevenson and Michael Martin

**Order today through www.harpers.org/store/rulesofthegame**
**Published by Franklin Square Press**
**ISBN 978-1-879957-58-9**
**Softcover $14.95**

FRANKLIN SQUARE PRESS

**Distributed through Midpoint Trade Books**

were no scripts. They were using a teleprompter, delivering lines at fairly high speed with occasional tactical pauses, well placed.

"Greece is selling bonds, raising euros."

"Markets are calming."

"Greece is moving toward a new austerity."

"Immediate pressure is relieved."

"Greece and Germany are talking."

"Votes of confidence. Calls for patience."

"Greece is ready to restore trust."

"Aid package of 40 billion dollars."

"How do they say thank-you in Greek?"

*"Efharisto."*

"Say it again, slowly."

"F. Harry Stowe."

"F. Harry Stowe."

They exchanged a fist bump, deadpan, without looking at each other.

"The worst may be over."

"Or the worst is yet to come."

"Do we know if the Greek bailout will do what it is designed to do?"

"Or will it do just the opposite?"

"What exactly is the opposite?"

"Think about markets elsewhere."

"Is anyone looking at Portugal?"

"Everyone's looking at Portugal."

"High debt, low growth."

"Borrow, borrow, borrow."

"Euro, euro, euro."

"Ireland has a problem. Iceland has a problem."

"Have we thought about the British pound?"

"The life and death of the British pound."

"The pound is not the euro."

"Britain is not Greece."

"But is the pound showing signs of cracking? Will the euro follow? Is the dollar far behind?"

"There is talk about China."

"Is there trouble in China?"

"Is there a bubble in China?"

"What is the Chinese currency called?"

"Latvia has the lat."

"Tonga has the ponga."

"China has the rebimbi."

"The rebimbo."

"China has the rebobo."

"The rebubu."

"What happens next?"

"It already happened."

"Does anyone remember?"

"Market plunges one thousand points in an eighth of a second."

"A tenth of a second."

"Faster and faster, lower and lower."

"A twentieth of a second."

"Screens glow and vibrate, phones jump off walls."

"A hundredth of a second. A thousandth of a second."

"Not real, unreal, surreal."

"Who is doing this? Where is it coming from? Where is it going?"

"It happened in Chicago."

"It happened in Kansas."

"It's a movie, it's a song."

I could feel the mood in the room, a pressing intensity, a need for something more, something stronger. I remained detached, watching the girls, wondering about their mother, what she had in mind, where she was leading us.

Laurie says softly, in a lilting voice: "Who do we trust? Where do we turn? How do we ever get to sleep?"

Kate says briskly, "Can computer technology keep up with computerized trading? Will long-term doubts yield to short-term doubts?"

"What is a fat-finger trade? What is a naked short sale?"

"How many trillions of dollars pledged to bleeding euro economies?"

"How many zeros is a trillion?"

"How many meetings deep in the night?"

"Why does the crisis keep getting worse?"

"Brazil, Korea, Japan, wherever."

"What are they doing and where are they doing it?"

"They're on strike again in Greece."

"They're marching in the streets."

"They're burning banks in Greece."

"They're hanging banners from sacred temples."

"Peoples of Europe, rise up."

"Peoples of the world, unite."

"The tide is rising, the tide is turning."

"Which way? How fast?"

There was a long pause. We watched and waited. Then the news report reached its defining moment, do-or-die, the point of no return.

The girls recited together:

*"Stalin Khrushchev Castro Mao.*

*"Lenin Brezhnev Engels—Pow!"*

These names, that exclamation, delivered in rapid singsong, roused the inmates to spontaneous noise. What

kind of noise was it? What did it mean? I sat stone-faced, in the middle of it, trying to understand. The girls repeated the lines once, then again. The men yelled and clamored, releasing themselves, these flabby white-collar felons, giving themselves up to some powerful impulse.

"*Brezhnev Khrushchev Mao and Ho.*

"*Lenin Stalin Castro Zhou.*"

The names kept coming. It resembled a school chant, the cry of leaping cheerleaders, and the men's response grew in volume and feeling. It was tremendous, totally, and it scared me. What did these names mean to the inmates? We were a long way from the funny terminology of earlier reports. These names were immense imprints on history. Did the inmates want to replace one doctrine, one system of government, with another? We were the end products of the system, the logical outcome, slabs of burnt-out capital. We were also men with families and homes, whatever our present situation. We had beliefs, commitments. It went beyond systems, I thought. They were asserting that nothing mattered, that distinctions were dead. Let the markets crash and die. Let the banks, the brokerage firms, the groups, the funds, the trusts, the institutes all turn to smoke.

"*Mao Zhou—Fidel Ho.*"

The aisles, meanwhile, were still and hushed—guards, doctors, camp administrators. I wanted it to be over. I wanted the girls to go home, do their homework, withdraw into their cell phones.

"*Marx Lenin Che—Hey!*"

Their mother was crazy, perverting the novelty of a children's stock-market report. The inmates were confused, stirring themselves into mindless anarchy. Only Feliks Zuber made sense, pumping his fist, feebly, a man who was here for attempting to finance a revolution, able to hear trumpets and drums in that chorus of names. It took a while before the energy in the room began to recede, the girls' voices becoming calmer now.

"We're all waiting for an answer."

"Accordingly, analysts say."

"Eventually, investors maintain."

"Elsewhere, economists claim."

"Somewhere, officials insist."

"This could be bad," Kate said.

"How bad?"

"Very bad."

"How bad?"

"End-of-the-world bad."

They stared into the camera, finishing in a whisper.

"F. Harry Stowe."

"F. Harry Stowe."

The report was over but the girls remained on-screen. They sat looking, we sat looking. The moment became uneasy. Laurie glanced to the side and then slid off her chair and moved out of camera range. Kate stayed put. I watched a familiar look creep into her eyes and across her mouth and jaw. This was the look of noncompliance. Why should she submit to an embarrassing exit caused by some dumb technical blunder? She would stare us all down. Then she would tell us exactly how she felt about the matter, about the show itself and the news itself. This is what made me want to get up and leave, to slip unnoticed out of the row and along the wall and into the dusty light of late afternoon. But I stayed and looked and so did she. We were looking at each other. She leaned forward now, placing her elbows on the desk, hands folded at chin level like a fifth-grade teacher impatient with my snickering and fidgeting or just my stupidity. The tension in the room had mass and weight. This is what I feared, that she would speak about the news, all news all the time, and about how her father always said that the news exists so it can disappear, this is the point of news, whatever story, wherever it is happening. *We depend on the news to disappear,* my father says. *Then my father became the news. Then he disappeared.*

But she only sat and looked and soon the inmates began to get restless. I realized that my hand was covering the lower part of my face, in needless parental disguise. People, a few at first, then more, then groups, all leaving now, some crouching down as they moved between the rows. Maybe they were being careful not to block the view of others but I thought that most were slinking out, in guilt and shame. Either way, the view stayed the same, Kate on camera, sitting there looking at me. I felt hollowed out but I couldn't leave while she was still there. I waited for the screen to go blank and finally,



the PARIS REVIEW

WINTER 2010

INTERVIEWS WITH
JONATHAN FRANZEN
LOUISE ERDRICH

NEW FICTION BY
PÉTER NÁDAS

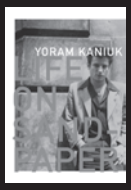
SKETCHES BY
SAUL STEINBERG

SUBSCRIBE NOW
www.theparisreview.org

HEBREW

*DOLLY CITY*
Orly Castel-Bloom
Available now

"From the first pages, *Dolly City* asserts itself as an important text . . . Kafka has finally arrived in Tel Aviv."
—*Le Monde*




*LIFE ON SANDPAPER*
Yoram Kaniuk
Forthcoming Feb 2011

"Of the novelists I've discovered in translation . . . the three for whom I have the greatest admiration are Gabriel García Márquez, Peter Handke, and Yoram Kaniuk."
—Susan Sontag

DALKEY ARCHIVE
NATIONAL LITERATURE SERIES

*THE DOLLS' ROOM*
Llorenç Villalonga
Available now

"It is a puzzle that this masterpiece has been so long in reaching the English-speaking world."
—*Publishers Weekly*

CATALAN

DALKEYARCHIVE.COM

long minutes later, that's what happened, in streaks and tremors.

The room had emptied out by the time a cartoon appeared, a fat boy rolling down a bumpy hill. Feliks Zuber was still in his seat up front, he and I in lone attendance now, and I waited for him to turn and wave at me, or simply sit there, dead.

I opened my eyes sometime before first light and the dream was still there, hovering, nearly touchable. We can't do justice to our dreams, reworking them in memory. They seem borrowed, part of another life, ours only maybe and only in the farthest margins. A woman is standing beneath a ceiling fan in a tall shadowy room in Ho Chi Minh City, the name of the city indelibly webbed within the dream, and the woman, momentarily obscured, is stepping out of her sandals and beginning to look familiar, and now I realize why this is so, because she is my wife, very weirdly, Sara Massey, slowly shedding her clothing, a tunic and loose trousers, an *ao dai*.

Was this meant to be erotic, or ironic, or just another random package of cranial debris? Thinking about it made me edgy, and after a moment I lowered myself from the end of the top bunk, quietly. Norman lay still, wearing a black sleep mask. I dressed and left the cubicle and went across the floor and out into the predawn mist. The guard post at the camp entrance was lighted, someone on duty to admit delivery vans that would be arriving with milk, eggs, and headless chickens from local farms. I cut across to the old wooden fence and ducked between the rails, then stood a while, staring into the dark, aware of my breathing, surprised by it, as if it were an event that only rarely and memorably takes place.

I felt my way slowly along a row of trees that lined one side of a dirt path. I moved toward the sound of traffic and reached the highway bridge in ten or twelve minutes. The bridge itself was closed to traffic, with repair work in perennial progress. I stood at a point roughly midway across and watched the cars speed below me. There was a half moon hanging low and looking strangely submerged in the pale mist. Traffic was steady, coming and going, pickups, hatchbacks, vans, all carrying the question of who and where, this early hour, and splashing the unwordable sound of their passage under the bridge.

I watched and listened, unaware of passing time, thinking of the order and discipline of the traffic, taken for granted, drivers maintaining a distance, fallible men and women, cars ahead, behind, to the sides, night driving, thoughts drifting. Why weren't there accidents every few seconds on this one stretch of highway, even before morning rush? This is what I thought from my position on the bridge, the surging noise and sheer speed, the proximity of vehicles, the fundamental differences among drivers, sex, age, language, temperament, personal history, cars like animatronic toys, but that's flesh and blood down there, steel and glass, and it seemed a wonder to me that they moved safely toward the mystery of their destinations.

This is civilization, I thought, the thrust of social and material advancement, people in motion, testing the limits of time and space. Never mind the festering stink of burnt fuel, the fouling of the planet. The danger may be real but it is simply the overlay, the unavoidable veneer. What I was seeing was also real but it had the impact of a vision, or maybe an ever-present event that flares in the observer's eye and mind as a burst of enlightenment. Look at them, whoever they are, acting in implicit accord, checking dials and numbers, showing judgment and skill, taking curves, braking gently, anticipating, watchful in three or four directions. I listened to the air blast as they passed beneath me, car after car, drivers making instantaneous decisions, news and weather on their radios, unknown worlds in their minds.

Why don't they crash all the time? The question seemed profound to me, with the first touch of dawn showing to the east. Why don't they get backended or sideswiped? It seemed inevitable from my elevated perspective—cars forced into the guardrails, nudged into lethal spins. But they just kept coming, seemingly out of nowhere, headlights, taillights, and they would be coming and going all through the budding day and into the following night.

I closed my eyes and listened. Soon I'd be going back to the camp, sinking into the everydayness of that life. Minimum security. It sounded childlike, a term of condescension and chagrin. I wanted to open my eyes to empty roads and blazing light, apocalypse, the thundering approach of something unimaginable. But minimum security was where I belonged, wasn't it? The least possible quantity, the lowest degree of restriction. Here I was, a truant, but one who would return. When I looked, finally, the mist was lifting, traffic heavier now, motorcycles, flatbeds, family cars, SUVs, drivers down there peering, the noise and rush, the compelling sense of necessity.

*Who are they? Where are they going?*

It occurred to me then that I was visible from the highway, a man on the bridge, at this hour, in silhouette, a man standing and watching, and it would be a natural response for the drivers, some of them, to glance up and wonder.

*Who is he? What is he doing there?*

He is Jerold Bradway, I thought, and he is breathing the fumes of free enterprise forever. ■

---

**December Index Sources**

**1** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; **2** U.S. Census Bureau (Suitland, Md.); **3,4** Victor Streib, Ohio Northern University (Ada, Ohio); **5** Center for Work-Life Policy (N.Y.C.); **6** U.S. Government Accountability Office; **7** U.S. Department of Education; **8,9** Administrative Office of the United States Courts (Washington); **10** Google, Inc. (Mountain View, Calif.); **11** Congressional Research Service (Washington); **12–15** Ariella Cohen, *The Lens* (New Orleans); **16,17** The World Bank (Washington); **18,19** Credit Suisse (London)/Wang Xiaolu, China Reform Foundation (Beijing); **20** U.S. International Trade Administration; **21,22** Gallup Poll (Washington); **23** Perry Renshaw, University of Utah (Salt Lake City); **24** And Vinyly (London); **25** National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (Tokyo); **26** United Nations World Food Programme (Havana); **27** UNICEF (N.Y.C.); **28** SymphonyIRI Group (Chicago); **29** National Cancer Institute (Bethesda, Md.); **30** *Harper's* research; **31** Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (Washington); **32–35** Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (Washington); **36** Born Free USA (Sacramento); **37** Liv Solveig Vors, University of Alberta (Edmonton); **38,39** U.S. Department of Agriculture; **40** *Harper's* research.

# NEW BOOKS

*By Lorin Stein*

Why don't people read poetry? One overlooked reason, I think, is that poems are so hard to write about in an enticing way. You can't summarize plot. You can't be funny about poetry, except at its expense—in which case you will be accused of taking a machine gun to a butterfly (or a barn door).[1] In the nineteenth century, it was fair game to say how a poem made you feel. The rules changed after World War II as faculty in universities and high schools adopted the methods of the New Criticism, with its emphasis on patterns, double meanings, and internal tensions—on braininess over gusty emotion.

Since mid-century the standard approach to verse has been close reading: a minute attention to word choice and the individual line. This can be thrilling to watch in a lecture, where the voice and face come into play. On the page, however, close readings tend to drag. Only the most stylish critics can build drama into the act of picking verse apart. It helps if, like Randall Jarrell for example, the critic is tough on the poets he or she loves. Jarrell's continual fear of being let down gives his famous reviews of the 1940s and 1950s an element of suspense. To watch Jarrell grapple with a disappointing collection by W. H. Auden is exciting and, finally, moving. A great love is at stake.

Helen Vendler is not, in this sense, a suspenseful writer. But the reigning doyenne of American poetry criticism is a close reader par excellence. She loves her favorite poets unstintingly. She seems to think and feel in their language—to think and feel *through* their work, as through a membrane. Her DICKINSON: SELECTED POEMS AND COMMENTARIES (Belknap/Harvard, $35) plays exactly to her strengths, as did her 1997 edition of Shakespeare's sonnets.

*The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (which came with an audio CD performed by Vendler herself) was a masterpiece of critical sangfroid. Rather than dwell on the sonnets' unsolvable enigmas, Vendler did what Vendler does best: find sensible, elegant interpretations that let the poems be read aloud. *Dickinson* doesn't come with a CD: otherwise the two books have much in common. After each of the 150 poems selected here, Vendler provides three or four pages of commentary. She will unearth a variorum reading, gloss a strange word or an allusion or odd grammar, point out correspondences between poems, deal unfussily with variant scansions. All of which can be immensely helpful to the nonexpert (at least, to this one). What I like best about Vendler's *Dickinson* is its can-do attitude. Yes, it assures the reader, the poem says what you think it says: trust your own eyes, experience, and heart.

During her lifetime and long after, Dickinson's poems were domesticated and condescended to. Editors messed with her dashes and capitalization. They gave her poems titles where none belonged. By now we know to find her daunting: cagey, coy, subversive, furious, elliptical. These are qualities we tend to prize, and even fetishize, in poetry today. For this reason, Dickinson can sound misleadingly contemporary to us. She has become our founding experimentalist. As Susan Howe put it, in *My Emily Dickinson,* "She explored the implication of breaking the law just short of breaking off communication with a reader." What interests Vendler is the "just short of." Her Dickinson is readable above all things. The poet's great themes—the erotic life lived in solitude, the awareness of death, the Christian mind despairing of resurrection—are full of bad news, and Vendler is not above paraphrasing to make sure you have a literal grasp of that bad news. She doesn't try to quash the mystery of the poems; she notes their ambiguities but by and large leaves those to do their work—and leaves us closer to a canonical poet whom we are still only coming to know.

[1] *Nicholson Baker's novel about poetry,* The Anthologist, *is an enticing and funny exception.*

*Lorin Stein is the editor of* The Paris Review.

"Parnassius apollo," by Jo Whaley. Courtesy Lisa Sette Gallery, Scottsdale, Arizona

It's hard to imagine a less Vendleresque critic (or Dickinsonian poet) than Ezra Pound. Too jokey, too impatient for close readings, he always leaped unpredictably from the detail to the big picture. In 1917–18 he published a series of twenty articles, "Studies in Contemporary Mentality," that took on the giant subject of the British periodical, all the way from stuffy old *Blackwood's* to middle-class women's magazines like *Quiver* to the lowbrow *Family Herald*. Pound took a special interest in the *Herald*'s medical-advice column, "Helps to Health":

> Archie has perhaps "an excess of natural waxy secretion in the ears"; white curd soap is recommended. Exercise, air, washing of various parts are suggested to other correspondents. The family physician seems possessed of good sense. The column is doubtless useful, and other weeklies might profit by similar methods.
>
> As an indication of stratum note that the "Family Herald" is the first paper in which I have found ads. relative to "nits and vermins in the hair," and the ad. beginning "IF YOUR CHILD has nits or head pests." It is arguable, by these portents, that the "Family Herald" reaches, or at least approaches, the verminous level, but still it is a cut above "Punch."

Sociologists, semioticians, the Frankfurt School—in his slapdash way Pound anticipates them all. In MODERNISM IN THE MAGAZINES: AN INTRODUCTION (Yale, $40), Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman claim Pound as the father of a more specific discipline: the study of magazines. The ones that interest them most are the Poundian "little magazines," such as *Poetry*, *Rhythm*, and *Blast*, that did so much to promote modern movements in literature and art.

Scholes, a former president of the Modern Language Association, and Wulfman, a digital librarian, intend their book as a primer for academics who want to figure out how magazines in the early twentieth century actually worked. They give hints on how to compare contributor lists, how to interpret circulation figures, how to relate advertising to editorial content. They decry the old archival practice of tearing out ad pages. Magazines, they argue, need to be studied and digitized intact.

Having recently woken up the editor of a literary magazine, I found myself riveted by this book. Here was a page from a 1920 issue of *Poetry* with what we call a "house" ad (for Harriet Monroe's lectures on the new trends in verse) directly below an ad for Horlicks malted milk. How on earth did she land Horlicks? The question may be of narrow interest, but I suspect even nonprofessionals will enjoy Pound's original articles, which Scholes and Wulfman reprint in their entirety—and will be charmed by the author's unabashed pleasure in old ephemera:

> Long ago John Stuart Mill suggested that poetry was "overheard"—not directly addressed to the reader—and later I. A. Richards picked up that notion and incorporated it into his own poetics. The transformation in magazine advertising that takes place as a magazine recedes from us in time moves it in this very direction. We—contemporary readers of old magazine advertising—are not being directly addressed either. We have been put in the position of the audience for poetry.

It is a melancholy truth that most ads age better than most poems. Scholes and Wulfman embrace that truth without holding it against either kind of communication. They don't make us choose between loving the moderns and understanding how they paid the bills.

In the United States, the Chilean Roberto Bolaño is best known as the author of two sprawling novels written late in his short life: *The Savage Detectives* and *2666*. But in his lifetime he made his name as a writer of short stories and novellas. The best of them, like "Clara," "Last Evenings on Earth," and *By Night in Chile*, are perfect in a way the longer works never tried to be.

Someone is telling a story he or she doesn't understand and yet needs to get right: that is the basic dilemma in Bolaño's fiction. His narrators second-guess themselves: "I heard some youngsters saying, Pepe the Cop, Pepe the Cop, then laughing, as if my nickname were the funniest joke in the world. Or maybe they were laughing for some other reason." They embellish movies, conversations, books, and songs with the meanings they *should* have had: "The song was about a pier and mist, and faithless lovers (as all lovers are in the end, he thought indulgently) and places that remain steadfastly faithful." His stories have none of the fake intimacy, and presuming friendliness, of most American short fiction. They are more like depositions or religious testimonials. Often his stories involve writers: Bolaño found writers inherently absurd and touching. They are to him what priests are to J. F. Powers, quixotic heroes trapped in a twilight faith.

THE INSUFFERABLE GAUCHO (New Directions, $22.95) reminds us how many kinds of story Bolaño could write on his favorite themes.[2] The title story—a parody of Borges and other Argentine worshipers of the gaucho—is Bolaño at his most purely comical. Set during the currency crisis of 2001, it involves a lawyer who retires to the pampas only to find the cattle replaced by feral rabbits. The disparate collection also includes an homage to Kafka ("Police Rat") and the famous essay "Literature + Illness = Illness." In my favorite story, "Álvaro Rousselot's Journey," an Argentine writer makes a pilgrimage to the French moviemaker who has plagiarized his novels. This shaggy-dog tale, full of ironic respect for the trade of the pulp writer and wry disdain for the vagaries of literary fashion, makes an ideal introduction to the Bolaño *imaginaire*. ■

[2] *In the interest of full disclosure—and future scholarship!—an advertisement for* The Insufferable Gaucho *appears in the most recent issue of* The Paris Review.



"Rinso," a British magazine advertisement, c. 1910 © The Advertising Archives, London;
"Study of Rabbits," by Charles Famin © Adoc-photos/Art Resource, New York City

# BELLOW IN PURGATORY

## The middle novels

*By Nathaniel Rich*

*Discussed in this essay:*

*Bellow: Novels 1970–1982,* by Saul Bellow. Library of America. 1,064 pages. $40.

Saul Bellow's standing as a Great Writer is secure, but how are his readers faring? Are they abandoning him, or dying off? Anecdotal evidence suggests that Bellow's fate is trending closer to that of Bernard Malamud (now best remembered for writing a novel that inspired a Robert Redford film) than Philip Roth. If Bellow is being read, he isn't being imitated. The distinguishing aspects of his style are rarely even attempted anymore: the feverish wrestling with abstract ideas (what Artur Sammler, in *Mr. Sammler's Planet,* calls "cerebral electronics"); the teeth-grinding hostility to political correctness; the pages-long monoliths of monologue; the excursions into farce; and the hymnal prose, with its alternating currents of vernacular and high formality. The fact that his most aggressively intellectual novel, *Herzog,* spent forty-two weeks on the bestseller list and sold 142,000 copies in hardcover is more incredible than ever. After all, what Bellow once derided as "the procrustean bed of American social realism" remains the dominant contemporary style. Or is his accomplishment simply too intimidating—does it represent an extremity, a dead end that thwarts any would-be followers? Has his work aged poorly, or have we?

It feels unseemly to ask these questions of a writer who died with as strong a claim on canonical status as anyone in the past century. *The Adventures of Augie March, Herzog,* and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* all won the National Book Award (Bellow is the only author to have pulled off the hat trick); belatedly, in 1976, the Pulitzer committee honored *Humboldt's Gift,* undeterred by the fact that the novel begins with Humboldt mocking the prize as "a dummy newspaper publicity award given by crooks and illiterates. You become a walking Pulitzer ad, so even when you croak the first words of the obituary are 'Pulitzer prizewinner passes.'" Later that year, Bellow won the Nobel. "I have scarcely begun to master my trade," he groused at the time. The eulogies began long before his death—which was just five years ago—and were rehashed with every honor he received and novel he published. In 1990, exasperated by the solicitations of biographers and academics, he said, "I still consider myself a growing tree, and I'm not ready for the sawmill." He went on to publish four more novels, remarry (his fifth wife), and, at the age of eighty-four, sire his fourth child.

The Library of America began anthologizing his work before he died, a rare, if not unprecedented, honor—Eudora Welty was the first to be carted off to the sawmill alive. The third volume in the series, *Bellow: Novels 1970–1982,* has now been published. It collects Bellow's three possessive novels: *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), *Humboldt's Gift* (1975), and *The Dean's December* (1982). Chronologically speaking, these books account for the middle phase of Bellow's nearly sixty-year career. But they don't read like mid-career novels. Bellow had a long, lingering youth, and his late period was prematurely induced. His middle period, as a result, got

*Nathaniel Rich's novel* The Mayor's Tongue *is out in paperback. He lives in New Orleans.*

Illustration by Riccardo Vecchio

#1 in Value
Since 1952
Caravan.com
"Caravan is ... very reasonably priced."
— *New York Times*
"Caravan keeps costs under control."
— *Audubon Magazine*
**Tours Priced $995 to $1295.**
*Fully guided tours. Includes all meals in Latin America. Includes all activities on all tours. Affordable vacation packages. Tax & fees extra.*
8 days Yellowstone, Mt. Rushmore
8 days Grand Canyon, Bryce, Zion
8 days New England Fall Foliage
8 days California and Yosemite
10 days Canada - Nova Scotia
9 days Canada - Rockies
10 days Guatemala
9 days Mexico
8 days Panama
10 days Costa Rica
**Free 28 page Info Guide**
**Call Today 1.800.CARAVAN**
*Or, visit us online at Caravan.com.*
**8 Day Panama Cruise & Tour**
*Welcome to fun, vibrant Panama. Enjoy sandy beaches, rainforests, and a day cruise on the Panama Canal. Visit both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. All inclusive. Join the experienced travelers and smart shoppers who rely on Caravan.com.*
Caravan.com

SPOIL HER this Christmas!

Send her a Pajama Gram®
Choose from hundreds of great styles. Each PajamaGram comes with lavender bath confetti, a gift card, and a do not disturb sign, delivered in a beautiful hatbox. ALL FREE!
Shown: Ruby Velour Lounge Set
It's a gift you'll both love!
1.800.GIVE.PJS
PajamaGram.com

squeezed—it consisted of a single novel, *Henderson the Rain King*, published in 1959, when he was forty-four. This was sandwiched between a series of novels about young men and, on the other side, beginning with *Herzog* (1964), novels about older men coming to terms with their earthly experience. The funereal tone is evident in the opening pages of *Mr. Sammler's Planet* ("No one made sober decent terms with death"), and it carries through to the gray title of *The Dean's December*. All three novels end with corpses.

Despite these superficial similarities, the novels stand beside one another unsteadily, a three-legged chair. Two are set in Chicago, one (*Mr. Sammler's Planet*) in New York City. Two are written in the third person, one (*Humboldt's Gift*) in the first. Two rely on comedy and satire; *The Dean's December* is consistently glum and death-haunted. Two of the main characters are gentiles, the other—Sammler—a Jew. Two of these men are crabby, reactionary, while Charles Citrine in *Humboldt's Gift* is harder to pin down—a successful writer in crisis who has begun to pick through the wreckage of his life, desperate to discover some underlying logic. Each novel takes place in a different decade, but the perspective is always backward-looking, elegiac. And reading the three novels today is itself an elegiac experience. It is to be reminded of a type of American novel—acerbic, adult, idea-centric—and of a style of writing—effusive, gnarled, obsessive—that have been hunted to the point of extinction. It's a reminder of something we have lost.

Before *Herzog*, Bellow was a critical success but a commercial nonentity; after *Herzog*, he was the proprietor of, in his words, "a flourishing literary business." Success allowed him certain privileges. Plot, about which he had never cared too deeply, was the first thing to go. In the novels following *Herzog*, it becomes increasingly marginalized, a contrivance that he must tolerate in order to balance his riffs and disquisitions. "*Sammler* isn't even a novel," he wrote in a letter to one admiring scholar. "It's a dramatic essay of some sort, wrung from me by the crazy Sixties." Artur Sammler is a half-blind Holocaust survivor living out his final days in a cramped apartment on the Upper West Side. The conversations that fill the book are arranged loosely around a series of encounters: a black pickpocket follows Sammler back to his apartment lobby and assaults him; Sammler speaks before a classroom of hostile, disrespectful students; and he has long colloquies with family members, friends, and a Hindu scientist who has written a speculative study of how man can live in outer space. The scientist's manuscript goes missing, but it is discovered later without too much trouble.

*Humboldt's Gift* is written with such exuberance and humor that it seems far more eventful, but in truth the plot is relatively bare. Citrine, a successful playwright, historian, and biographer, is enduring a painful divorce and trying to keep up with a new, much younger girlfriend who enjoys spending his money. His thoughts turn frequently to Von Humboldt Fleisher, a wildman-poet of the Thirties (modeled partly after Delmore Schwartz), from whom Citrine has become estranged after many years of intimate camaraderie. A flamboyant small-time gangster, Rinaldo Cantabile, tries to extort Citrine; he has a plan to make money off of Humboldt's unproduced film scripts. As Citrine travels from Chicago to New York City, Madrid, and Paris, he becomes absorbed by memories of Humboldt and reflections on the perils of worldly success and aging.

Reflection is also the dominant mode for Albert Corde in *The Dean's December*. He has enraged friends and colleagues by writing a pair of incendiary essays for *Harper's* about poverty and prisons in Chicago.* Complicating matters, he's become entangled in a criminal investigation of the brutal murder of a college stu-

* *"You have to suspend belief to imagine . . . Harper's publishing to the extent of two long installments these meanderings of an epigone of Saul Bellow's," wrote Hugh Kenner in his scornful review of the novel in these pages.*

dent. Corde escapes Chicago with his wife for Bucharest: his Romanian mother-in-law is on her deathbed. The main conflict is provided by a nasty Communist bureaucrat who capriciously blocks access to the dying mother.

These few tethers of plot generate little suspense and often drift into farce. Their purpose is to reflect, metaphorically, the novels' brawny themes. A representative example comes at the end of a major scene in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*. Sammler and the Hindu scientist, Dr. Govinda Lal, are having dinner. For twenty-five pages the two men pontificate on such subjects as Rousseau's views on free will, the current state of biology, the dangers of overpopulation, the narcissism of their age ("the modern individuality boom"), death and the afterlife, H. G. Wells, Marx, Aristotle—and then Sammler gets started on space travel:

> I suppose we must jump off, because it is our human fate to do so. If it were a rational matter, then it would be rational to have justice on this planet first. Then, when we had an earth of saints, and our hearts were set upon the moon, we could get in our machines and rise up …

Just as Sammler is winding himself up all over again, he is interrupted by his daughter. His feet, she points out, are covered with water. A pipe has burst in the upstairs bathroom and the house is flooding. The disruption advances the plot, but it contains a symbolic message too. As soon as Sammler begins to drift too far into outer space, Bellow humbles him with a dousing—a welcome dose of reality, and, with its somewhat hackneyed allusion to the biblical flood, a reminder of how far we are from achieving Sammler's "earth of saints."

Bellow knows he doesn't need to rely on story to nudge the reader through his pages. The language is its own engine, propulsive and churning, though rarely showy. Bellow had reached his most manic pitch in *The Adventures of Augie March*, but in *Humboldt's*



**Boston University** Graduate School of Arts & Sciences
MFA in Creative Writing

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

**Our program, one of the oldest, most prestigious,** and selective in the country, was recently placed among the top ten by *The Atlantic Monthly,* which went on to rank our faculty and our alumni among the top five. The magazine might have been impressed by our two most celebrated workshops—one, in poetry, was led by Robert Lowell, who had scattered around him Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and George Starbuck; the other, much more recent, was led by Leslie Epstein, whose students included Ha Jin, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Peter Ho Davies. Our classes still meet in the same small room, which allows through its dusty windows a glimpse of the Charles. These days, the poetry workshops are led by our regular faculty, Robert Pinsky, Louise Glück, and Rosanna Warren; those in fiction are led by Leslie Epstein, Ha Jin himself, and Allegra Goodman. Our famed playwriting classes are taught by Kate Snodgrass, Ronan Noone, and Melinda Lopez. We are also pleased to add that, thanks to a generous donor, we are launching a new fellowships program that aims to send a good number of our students abroad for a typical stay of three months, after completing their intensive workshops here.

It is difficult to know how best to measure a student's success or the worth of a program to a writer. Our graduates have won every major award in each of their genres, including, in playwriting, the Charles MacArthur Award, the Heideman Award, and four Elliot Norton Awards; in poetry, the Whiting Award, the Norma Farber First Book Award, along with three winners of the Discovery/The Nation Award and two winners of the National Poetry Series; in fiction our graduates have won the Pulitzer Prize, the PEN/Faulkner, the PEN/Hemingway, and the National Book Award. Every month one of our graduates brings out a book of poetry or fiction with a major publisher; and some, like Sue Miller and Arthur Golden, have spent a good deal of time on bestseller lists. Over the last decade we have placed more than a score of our graduates in tenure-track positions at important universities (Peter Ho Davies and Carl Phillips direct the creative writing programs at Michigan and Washington University in St. Louis).

We make, of course, no such assurances. Our only promise to those who join us is of a fair amount of time in that river-view room, time shared with other writers in a common, most difficult pursuit: the perfection of one's craft. For more information about the program, our visiting writers, financial aid, or our new Robert Pinsky Global Fellowships, please write to Director, Creative Writing Program, Boston University, 236 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215 or visit our website at www.bu.edu/writing. **Application deadline is March 1, 2011.**

Boston University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution.

SOLUTION TO THE NOVEMBER PUZZLE

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| V | E | T | N | I | Z | I | N | G | M | I | S |
| A | G | O | E | R | I | N | A | O | I | A | N |
| M | O | N | U | I | T | N | A | R | D | P | E |
| P | I | T | T | H | S | A | R | Y | G | E | R |
| I | N | I | E | E | D | R | L | E | O | Z | E |
| R | E | S | R | R | A | D | I | A | N | E | R |
| T | I | M | T | S | S | T | E | R | T | E | S |
| I | C | E | I | D | E | R | E | S | I | L | E |
| E | E | T | C | A | P | A | W | H | N | E | S |
| T | R | A | K | E | Y | O | C | E | S | T | A |
| H | I | C | N | S | V | R | E | R | R | E | S |
| S | C | H | N | O | R | E | S | T | I | T | E |

NOTES FOR "CRAZY QUILT":

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov. Note: * indicates an anagram.*

ACROSS: 1. VETERIN-ARIAN, pun (Aryan); 9. AGONIZING, (z)igzag-in-on*; 10. NAOMIS*; 11. MO(N)THS; 14. P(IT[U]IT)AR-Y; 15. IRRADIATES*; 16. LEGER, hidden; 17. RESEED, homonym; 18. TI-M'I-DER, rev.; 20. STERNER*; 23. ICECAP*; 25. ESNES*; 29. AWHILE*; 31. TRANSVESTITE*; 32. CERES, homonym; 33. HIC-KEY; 34. SCH-N-ORRERS*

DOWN: 1. V-A(nother)-MPI-(elc)RIC, rev.; 2. EGOTISTIC*; 3. NEUTERS*; 4. ZIT-HER; 5. INN-A(RD)S; 6. GORG(E)-ON; 7. MID(Y)EARS*; 8. SNEEZE*; 12. NINETIETHS*; 13. P(RE-RE)LEASE; 19. M.E.-TRIC(k); 21. TRACES, two mngs.; 22. SEST*-E.T.; 24. D(one)-AY; 26. INERT, hidden; 27. EACH, hidden; 28. PESO*; 30. WORE, homonym

**SMALL SHIPS, FREIGHTERS,** Expeditions, Educational or Traditional Cruises, Clippers, Riverboats, Barges. Deluxe. Save with TravLtips fares. Free trial membership includes three issues of publication. **(800) 872-8584 info@travltips.com, www.travltips.com**

**LEARN JUST ABOUT ANY LANGUAGE ABROAD—**All ages and levels, homestay or hotel, one week to several months. Also: volunteer/internships, programs for professionals, families, teens, semester abroad. **www.amerispan.com (800) 879-6640**

**Use BidonTravel.com tips** for the lowest prices on great hotels.

**CLOTHING-OPTIONAL & NUDE GETAWAYS tanr.com/hmWomen's**

**Matt Barrett's GREECE TRAVEL GUIDE:** Informative, entertaining, essential, and free **www.greecetravel.com**

**Snow 'n' Ski Trains,** BritRail Pass Deals, Holiday Gift Ideas. **TrainTraveling.com/December**

**DATE SMART/PARTY SMART.** Join the introduction network exclusively for graduates, students, and faculty of the Ivies, Seven Sisters, Stanford, U of Chicago, and others. All ages. The Right Stuff **(800) 988-5288 www.rightstuffdating.com**

**Award-winning** editor/ghostwriter helps make your ideas, manuscripts, shine. **(954) 429-9373**

**PRISONER SEEKS PEN PALS.** SWM, 45 years old, 6'2", 225 lbs. with blue eyes seeks SWF. Has two graduate degrees, traveled extensively internationally, enjoy music and writing letters. Write to

**PEN PAL**
**P.O. Box 13239**
**Pittsburgh, PA 15243**

**The Whole World Calendar** lists over 1,000 national, religious, and cultural holidays around the world with full-color graphics of flags, coats of arms, artwork, and photos. $14.95 + $1.95 postage. **www.TheWholeWorldCalendarCompany.com.**

**"Canada's most prolific unknown songwriter" www.mikecarew.com**

**UNORTHODOX EROTICA,** catalog $2. Synergy Book Service, POB 8, Flemington, NJ 08822. **www.SynergyBookService.com (908) 782-7101**

**Disclaimer:** *Harper's Magazine* assumes no liability for the content of or reply to any personal advertisement. The advertiser assumes complete liability for the content of and all replies to any advertisement and for any claims made against *Harper's Magazine* as a result thereof. The advertiser agrees to indemnify and hold *Harper's Magazine* and its employees harmless from all costs, expenses (including reasonable attorney fees), liabilities, and damages resulting from or caused by the publication placed by the advertiser or any reply to any such advertisement.

*Gift*—a five-hundred-page monologue—the language is still athletic, if less indulgent. Chicago, as usual, serves as his muse:

> Over the lake, steel mills twinkled. Lamplight showed the soot already fallen on the leaves of the wall ivy.... Chicago, this night, was panting, the big urban engines going, tenements blazing in Oakwood with great shawls of flame, the sirens weirdly yelping, the fire engines, ambulances, and police cars—mad-dog, gashing-knife weather, a rape and murder night, thousands of hydrants open, spraying water from both breasts.

There are exclamation points embedded in this prose, in the "blazing," "mad-dog, gashing-knife," "rape and murder." And in the "panting" and "yelping" the city assumes a life of its own—it's a rabid animal, or a psychopath who's escaped from the insane asylum. (Elsewhere in the paragraph ambulances "gulp and whoop, bowel-deep and hysterical.") Bellow understands better than any writer the magnificence of industrial ugliness. One of his main strategies is to depict urban decay in terms normally associated with beauty and grace. So we have "great shawls of flame," twinkling steel mills, hydrants "spraying water from both breasts" like a Roman fountain. In these three novels the city—whether New York, Chicago, or even Bucharest—is barbaric and deranged, a "moronic inferno." Faced with this, Bellow's heroes shudder and turn away, becoming both inwardly obsessive and hyperactive.

Bellow accelerates his prose proportionately. At times he even foregoes punctuation. In *Humboldt's Gift* a girlfriend's eyes are "great blue mid-summer ocean-haze," a gossip columnist is "large heavy strong tanned sullen fatigued," the California sky gives off "marvelous temperate pulsating blue heat." Even in *The Dean's December,* the most sober and calculated of these novels, the writing is exclamatory. On the subject of Chicago alone we get "the crying ugliness of the Chicago night," "these broken-bottle, dog-fouled streets," "endless regions of the stunned city—many, many square miles of civil Passchendaele or Somme."

When taken out of context, these sustained flights of descriptive writing may seem excessive. But this profusion of description is, in fact, the point. Bellow doesn't leave this open to interpretation. He announces his strategy explicitly. Each of these novels contains an early passage that suggests that obsessive attention to detail has a higher, even spiritual, purpose:

*Mr. Sammler's Planet*:

> The world, Riverside Drive, was wickedly lighted up. Wicked because the clear light made all objects so explicit and this explicitness taunted Mr. Minutely-Observant Artur Sammler. All metaphysicians please note. Here is how it is. You will never see more clearly. And what do you make of it?

*Humboldt's Gift*:

> Often I sat at the end of the day remembering everything that had happened, in minute detail, all that had been seen and done and said. I was able to go backward through the day, viewing myself from the back or side, physically no different from anyone else. If I had bought Renata a gardenia at an open-air stand, I could recall that I had paid seventy-five cents for it. I saw the brass milling of the three silver-plated quarters. I saw the lapel of Renata's coat, the white head of the long pin.... If this was what transcendence took, it was a cinch, I could do it forever ...

*The Dean's December*:

> It was an instinct with Corde—maybe it was a weakness—always to fix attention on certain particulars, in every situation to grasp the details. If he took Valeria to dine at the Étoile, he brought away with him a clear picture of the wine waiter. That a bald man had triple creases at the back of his skull could not be left out of account, nor could the shape of his thumbs, the health of his face, the spread of his nose, the strength of his stout Italian body in the waiter's suit.... He was temperamentally an image man. To observe so much was not practical, sometimes it was disabling, often downright painful, but actualities could not be left out.

"Minutely-Observant," "minute detail," "to grasp the details": each character is defined by his attempt to catalogue the small details that make up a life—the bald man with a triple crease at the back of his skull, the

brass milling of a quarter. Close observation may not be "practical," but it is essential.

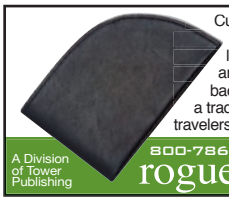
Not an original philosophy, perhaps, but few writers have pursued it with such determination. Faced with a chaotic world—"We with our oversupply of receptors were in a state of nervous chaos"—Bellow's old men take solace in precise itemization. New York City telephone booths are "smashed, crippled. They were urinals, also." Citrine's Mercedes-Benz 280 SL is a "shimmering silver motor tureen" until it is assaulted by vandals who cover its windshield with "white-fracture-blooms." Humboldt's face is "dead gray, East River gray." Dark winter afternoons in the streets of Communist Bucharest, the brown sky illuminated dimly by feeble yellow street lamps, create a melancholy that Dean Corde defines as "air-sadness." A character in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* says, "Knowing the names of things braces people up." Bellow's characters are always in need of bracing up.

The novels' many searching, ruminative passages work in the same way as the descriptive ones. Bellow often came under attack for what the critic Roger Shattuck called his "unabashed philosophical reflexion." This approach, which Bellow initiated in earnest in *Herzog* (using the form of written correspondence, with people fictional and real, to give shape to his long disquisitions), is not without flaws. The meditations can be bizarrely overwrought, as in Corde's speech near the end of *The Dean's December,* when the abstraction becomes dizzying: "America is never going to take an open position on the pain level, because it's a pleasure society, a pleasure society which likes to think of itself as a tenderness society …" And the Dean's eagerness, in a conversation with a colleague, to give an "inspired recitation" of his "impressions" is too reminiscent of Sammler's giddiness at the prospect of giving a "recital … [of] some of my views. Or impressions." In these moments the suspension of disbelief hiccups and you begin to hope for another flood.

It didn't help Bellow that the ideas and opinions expressed in the philosophical sections were not always the correct ones. A major criticism, which began to appear during this 1970–82 period and lingered for the rest of his life, is directed at the racial vulgarity of some of his rants. The most notorious example is the encounter between Sammler and the black pickpocket. The pickpocket becomes aware that Sammler is observing him work on the public bus. He follows Sammler back to Sammler's apartment lobby. There he pins Sammler against a table and exposes his penis: "great oval testicles, a large tan-and-purple uncircumcised thing—a tube, a snake … suggesting the fleshly mobility of an elephant's trunk." Very well. There is also the scene in which Sammler gives a lecture at a student program intended "to help backward black pupils with their reading problems." As soon as Sammler begins to hold forth ("Perhaps I could begin with the fall of Kerensky. Maybe with Brest-Litovsk …") he is interrupted by a student. "Hey! Old man … What you are saying is shit." The student addresses his peers. "Why do you listen to this effete old shit? What has he got to tell you? His balls are dry. He's dead. He can't come."

*The Dean's December* has more where that came from. A black ambassador "must have been one of those patrician blacks from Washington or Philadelphia whose ancestors were manumitted slaves before the Civil War. Corde had met some of those before. They had summer homes in Edgartown." An ex-convict has "a powerful intelligent Negro head. His brief arms were widely separated by his cylinder chest; his eyes, also wide-set, measured you with extreme detachment. Under this waiting broad-gauged gaze …" (The preponderant use of "Negro" is tricky for a book published in 1982.) The Dean's essays on black Chicago are anthropological studies of "American barbarism" in which he is alarmed to discover in the slums "a wilderness wilder than the Guiana bush." Bellow—and Dean Corde—despair at the plight of the inner-city communities, but the presiding mood is outrage at the fact that black schoolchildren don't read Shakespeare, that the old neighborhoods have been destroyed, that "Chicago





Curved Wallet in the shape of your front pants pocket is lighter than a normal wallet and can help to relieve some back pain caused by sitting on a traditional bulky wallet. Great for travelers. Only $30.00
A Division of Tower Publishing
800-786-1768 EXT. 14
roguewallet.com

European Beret $14
100% Wool • One Size Fits All
Black, Navy, Brown, Red, Camel, Grey
Check or Credit Card w/Exp. Date.
Add $2 shipping plus $1 each additional
www.johnhelmer.com
John Helmer • Est. 1921 • (503) 223-4976
969 S.W. Broadway, Dept. P120 • Portland, OR 97205

AFRICA • CHINA • INDIA • JAPAN • NEPAL • SRI LANKA • TAIWAN
Since 1989
UPTON TEA IMPORTS
Purveyor of the World's Finest Teas
1-800-234-8327
www.uptontea.com
Free catalog listing over 350 varieties of garden-fresh, loose tea
34A Hayden Rowe St. * Hopkinton, MA 01748

**OldenMexico.com.** Shop online for zesty prints, canvases, cards. Hang some **COLOR** on your walls!

**NorthPoleTrains.com**
Polar Express rides, Santa Train trips, and more.

**www.AzureGreen.com**
Pyramid-charged magical products.
**(413) 623-2155.**

**Letterpress Designs Studio in NYC** offers custom-printed holiday cards, specialized stationery, unique business announcements & elegant wedding invitations + DIY letterpress classes: **www.letterpressdesigns.com** or **www.IntimaPress.com**.

FREE REPORT ($15^{00} Value)
$H_2O$ Scams Exposed
Truth revealed about distilled, mineral, spring, well, filtered, bottled, alkalized and more...
1-800-874-9028 waterwise.com
© 2007 Waterwise Inc

ACADEMY OF REMOTE VIEWING
HOME TRAINING PACKAGES
AS SEEN ON TV: NIGHTLINE AND REAL X-FILES. REVOLUTIONARY MIND-EMPOWERING TECHNOLOGY USED BY INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES. INCREASES INTUITION 1000x. FORECAST PERSONAL/WORLD/FINANCIAL FUTURE EVENTS. PERCEIVE ANY TARGET IN SPACE/TIME. COOPERATIVE REMOTE INFLUENCING. TAUGHT BY FORMER OPERATIVE. THOUSANDS SATISFIED TRAINEES WORLDWIDE. (888) 748-8386
VISIT: WWW.PROBABLEFUTURE.COM

AFRICA ◆ CHINA ◆ INDIA ◆ JAPAN ◆ NEPAL ◆ SRI LANKA ◆ TAIWAN
Since 1989
UPTON TEA IMPORTS
Purveyor of the World's Finest Teas
1-800-234-8327 www.uptontea.com
Free catalog listing over 350 varieties of garden-fresh, loose tea
34A Hayden Rowe St. ✻ Hopkinton, MA 01748

**"GLOBAL WARMING: THE TRUTH."** We're done. **Irawrites.com.** ("Essays/Criticism")

**DR. ALKAITIS HOLISTIC ORGANIC SKIN FOOD. www.alkaitis.com**

**Woman Spanks Woman Exuberantly!** In ***Bed Bad and Beyond*** three women engage in explicitly sexual spanking. 75 minute DVD $24.95. Call (702) 395-0783 or remit to: Shadow Lane-H, 8414 Farm Rd. #180-281, Las Vegas, NV 89131. Spanking brochure collection $5. Or visit: **www.shadowlane.com**

**Ever thought about what would happen if Jesus came back?** *Sweet Jesus*—a movie that contemplates Jesus stepping out of the Bible into modern-day politics and religion. Deluxe DVD/CD set—**www.gweniviere.com/sweet-jesus.html**

**We research and write memoirs and histories. (705) 876-9094. www.twilsonassociates.com**

**For classified rates and information, please contact Jennifer Adams, Classified Sales Manager, at (212) 420-5772 or email jennifer@harpers.org**

TEXT ADS: Minimum ten words. RATES per word: 1X $5.10; 3X $5.00; 6X $4.85; 9X $4.65; 12X $4.55. Telephone numbers, box numbers, URLs and email addresses count as two words. ZIP codes count as one word. Classified Display ads: One inch, $310; Two inch, $600; 1/12, $730; 1/9, $860. Frequency discounts available. 15% agency discounts for display ads only. Closing dates: 1st of the 2nd preceding month. For example: August 1st for the October issue. Prepayment for all text ads and first-time display advertisers is required. Make checks payable to *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, or charge your ad to MasterCard, Visa, or American Express. Include telephone number on all correspondence. For size requirements and inquiries, call Jennifer Adams, Classified Sales Manager, at (212) 420-5757 or email jennifer@harpers.org. PERSONAL ADS: Minimum ten words. RATE per word: $5.10. Check, MasterCard, Visa, or American Express only. TO RESPOND TO AN AD: *Harper's Magazine* Personals, Box # (4-digit #), 666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

wasn't Chicago anymore." This is accompanied by nostalgia for "the good old days when Chicago was a city of immigrants who had found work, food and freedom."

And yet, for all the bad taste, bloviation, and sentimentality, the books have no political agenda. The Dean offers only abstract critiques of the education system ("Nobody teaching the young language, human usages or religion, they will go back to the great ancient forest and be like the wild beasts of Orpheus"), modern technology ("Modern achievements, the Dean believed, jets, skyscrapers, high technology, were a tremendous drain on intelligence"), and the politicians who wish they could simply dispose of "the blacks and Puerto Ricans, the aged too poor to move.... Let them be ruined, decay, die and eliminate themselves. There are some who seem willing that this should happen. I'm not one of them. Not me."

You can find Bellow crotchety, you can find him unsubtle, you can even find him droning and fatiguing, but he's not didactic. He doesn't claim to have the answers. As he writes in *Sammler*: "Both knowing and not knowing—one of the more frequent human arrangements." And in *The Dean's December*: "The Dean's talent was for observation, not for generalization and synthesis." Whenever his characters reach the culmination of a debate, at the very moment you expect Bellow to issue a verdict, he retreats—the room begins to flood, the waiter appears with a bill, a phone rings. It's a Talmudic approach, the questions more important than the answers. These philosophical passages study the inner lives of his characters in the same way the descriptive passages observe the outside world. The two modes are exactly complementary.

"We'd better deal with whatever it is that's in us by nature, and I don't see people being willing to do that," says Corde, "What I mainly see is the evasion." Bellow goes headlong into the thornier reaches of psychology, religion, and philosophy. He may make passing references to Steiner and Spinoza and Vico and Hegel (it's a crutch, the name-dropping), but his genius is to situate these philosophers' loftier arguments within the context of everyday life. And in the minds of Sammler, Citrine, and Corde (and, for that matter, Moses Herzog, Ithiel Regler in *A Theft*, the unnamed narrator of *The Bellarosa Connection*, Harry Tellman in *The Actual*, Chick in *Ravelstein*), he achieves something that few works of philosophy can. He brings what he calls "the big human questions"—What happens after death? Why are we here? What is a moral life?—down to earth. "What could the main thing be?" asks Sammler, and Citrine wonders the same:

> Oh, I admired some of these intellectuals without limits.... But nothing had been done about the main question. The main question, as Walt Whitman had pointed out, was the death question.... I, too, in spite of lethargy and weakness, was here for a big reason. Just what this was I would consider later, when I looked back on my life in the twentieth century. Calendars would disintegrate under the gaze of the spirit. But there would be a December spot for a subway ride in cars disfigured by youth gangs, and a beautiful woman whom I followed on the boardwalk while hearing the peppery pang of shooting galleries and smelling popcorn and hot dogs, thinking of the sex of her figure, the consumerism of her garments, and of my friendship with Von Humboldt Fleisher which had brought me to Coney Island. In my reflective purgatory I would see it all from a different perspective and know, perhaps, how all these peculiarities added up.

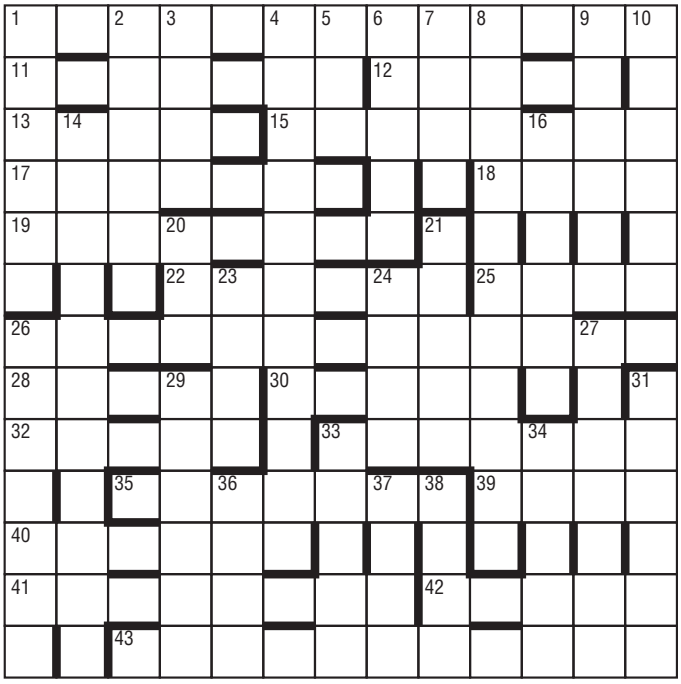
"Reflective purgatory" is not a bad description of these three novels. Fluctuating between "the upper stories of higher consciousness" and the moronic inferno—though favoring the inferno—Bellow finds divinity in the peculiar details that add up to a human life. There is more poetry in "the peppery pang of shooting galleries" than in the long recitations on theosophy, late Communism, and the decay of the Chicago slums. Bellow knew this, but poetry was not the only thing he was after. ■

# PUZZLE

## THEME AND VARIATIONS

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*

*(with acknowledgments to* The Listener*)*



Nine entries are unclued. Three of them, Theme Words A, B, and C, are linked in a familiar way. Each Theme Word then has two variations. The variations are different in each case. For example, if the Theme Words were PEPPER and SALT, the variations might be ENERGY and APIECE (definitions of component parts of PEP-PER), and WATER and TALKS (second half of terms beginning with SALT).

Clue answers include four proper nouns. 14D is a variant spelling, and 6D is uncommon. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 79.

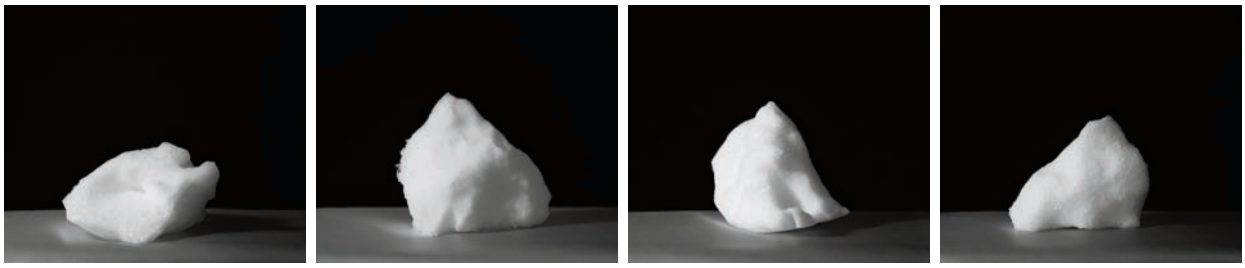
ACROSS

1. Ensembles, clothes characteristic on sailor—people are mad to get them (13)
11. A bit of fun: a war exercise in the dark (7)
12. Exercised more small registered stocks, raw material (5)
13. Instant second-level connection (5)
15. *Theme Word A* (8)
17. *Variation on Theme Word B* (7)
18. *Variation on Theme Word A* (4)
19. Soldiers, protected by steel fragments, ones forming lines at funerals (8)
22. One repeatedly fleeced: a record set by a con artist, initially (6)
25. Dare to be different—understand? (4)
26. *Variation on Theme Word C* (6,3,4)
28. Put away silver before reading *Rolling Stone* (5)
30. Over a profit … (5)
32. … rich man cut short an about-face (5)
33. Reel showing gagster looking funny (7)
35. Removed from an apron, university has no women allowed in gym (7)
39. Knowledge in abundance, if you don't include Georgia (4)
40. Squares made of 31D (6)
41. Irresponsible, loud, precipitous, without any capital (8)
42. Petitions, accepting Republican obstacles, in the main (5)
43. *Variation on Theme Word B* (11)

DOWN

1. Sort of flat, almost imperceptible, temperature being lowered (6)
2. Hit on the head, cap knocked off, fell down (6)
3. Defaced? Gapes, bristles (4)
4. Engineer rants over schemes involving time locks moved to a new location (11)
5. One liner that doesn't need the third plane (3)
6. Where does sex occur in yeast? Listen, ask us! (5)
7. Expression of surprise in small firm fish (4)
8. *Variation on Theme Word C* (4,7)
9. Traveling kit, or a team of horses (6)
10. Was ungodly man's name brought up? (6)
14. Hung around with large friend, all choked up? (11)
16. Scissors run through the ears? It's curtains! (6)
20. Purse done up in yak (3)
21. Problem nun's facing: solo with male (5)
23. Thrill killer—they say it depends on your ear! (4)
24. *Variation on Theme Word A* (4)
26. *Theme Word C* (5,2)
27. Too old, but with $100 you can get insurance (7)
29. *Theme Word B* (6)
31. The sound of a country musical (6)
33. Son, too, doesn't finish a dance (5)
34. Those showing up for ego trips on the outside of restaurants (5)
36. Some early leaf lettuce heads to market (4)
37. Tell people to be quiet? Golly! (4)
38. Island qualified for uprising (4)

Contest Rules: Send completed diagram with name and address to "Theme and Variations," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by December 15. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine* (limit one winner per household per year). Winners' names will be printed in the January 2011 issue. Winners of the October puzzle, "Good Times," are Cynthia Bjorlie, Gloucester, Mass.; Megumi Dold, Cedar City, Utah; and Daniel Lewis, Berkeley, Calif.



# FINDINGS

Scientists were concerned about the lack of standardization for placebo ingredients, about the abundance of sugary sports drinks consumed by athletic children, about the increase in alcohol consumption that occurs when American college students study abroad (twofold for those twenty-one and older, threefold for those younger than twenty-one), and about the unprecedented rate of suicide among middle-aged people as baby boomers continue to age and to kill themselves. Doctors at the American Academy of Pediatrics conference revealed, in the study "How Far Toddlers Can Reach onto Standard Kitchen Countertops," that toddlers can reach farther and more easily than expected onto standard kitchen countertops. African-American motorcyclists are more likely than white American motorcyclists to wear helmets but also more likely to die in crashes. The small black African wasps brought to Hawaii to fight invasive gall wasps were successfully protecting the state's wiliwili trees, but the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park had failed to stop elk from eating quaking aspens, disappointing scientists who had hoped that the wolves could do so by creating a "landscape of fear."

It was found that exposing young snails to platinum causes them to form shells on the inside of their bodies rather than the outside; researchers noted, however, that environmental platinum pollution is currently too low to spur widespread snail–slug conversion. Solomon's lily was found to attract *Drosophila* flies by giving off the deceptive scent of fruity wine. Loud noise makes food taste less sweet or salty but feel more crunchy, and white noise improves the concentration of inattentive Swedish children but worsens that of normally attentive ones. Sensitivity to two common painkillers was found to vary widely between piglets of different ages; it was suggested that analgesic dosage be more carefully calibrated for piglet castration. Researchers found that congenital deafness in cats, the only animals other than humans that may be born deaf, repurposes the brain's auditory cortex to enhance peripheral vision. Half of stroke victims experience phantom limbs, and two thirds of Americans with voice-loss problems fail to report them. Psychologist Spike Lee found that telling harmful lies makes people desire mouthwash, whereas writing harmful lies makes people desire hand sanitizer. Rhesus macaques, who normally are not self-aware, will, following brain surgery, examine their genitals in a mirror. Similar evidence of self-awareness was previously limited to higher primates, dolphins, magpies, and an elephant named Happy. Neurobiologists created mice that can smell light.

New clocks made it possible to measure the effect that one-foot changes in altitude have on the speed of time. The internal incubation of cuckoo eggs prior to laying, first theorized two centuries ago but long thought impossible, was found to be the method whereby cuckoo chicks obtain the head start necessary to bring about the deaths of their foster siblings. Killer whales were evolving into two species. The average economic cost of a U.S. murder was estimated to be $17.25 million. Tyrannosaurs once were human-sized and later were cannibals. Boston Medical Center gastroenterologists urged the adoption of the newly devised Boston Bowel Preparation Scale. "Having this standardized tool," said a leading colonoscopy researcher, "will help clinicians across the globe accurately report on the cleanliness of the bowel." The *Paris japonica* plant was found to have the largest known genome, fifty-one times the size of the human genome and surpassing even that of the marbled lungfish. The salmon of Spain were straying from their natal rivers. Scientists in New Guinea discovered a new genus of mice, which they described as "very, very beautiful." ■

*"The Museum of Snow," photographs by Emma Wieslander. Courtesy the artist and Humble Arts Foundation, New York City*